

[IMAGE]

Be Smart When Choosing Dietary Supplements

With the baby boomer generation leading the way, more and more people are making an effort to get and stay healthy and they are turning to dietary supplements to help them achieve their health goals. But, with so many supplements available all making claims that they are the most beneficial, how do you decide which supplements are safe, effective and right for you?

The National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) has put together a fact sheet about how to choose the right dietary supplement. The fact sheet provides a general overview of supplements, discusses the safety considerations and suggests sources for additional information.

There are some key points NCCAM wants the public to be aware of when looking into taking dietary supplements. The three key factors offered in the NCCAM fact sheet include:

1. Federal regulations for dietary supplements are very different from those for prescription and over-the-counter drugs. A dietary supplement manufacturer does not have to prove a product's safety and effectiveness before it is marketed.
2. If you are thinking about using a dietary supplement, get your information from reliable sources. It is important to know that dietary supplements may interact with medications or other supplements and might contain ingredients not listed on the label.
3. Make sure you tell your health care provider about any complementary and alternative practices you use, including dietary supplements. Your health care practitioner needs to have a complete picture of what you do in order to effectively manage your health. Making sure you are both on the same page will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

Dietary Supplements - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark NCCAM also points out that, "If you are taking a dietary supplement, read the label instructions. Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions, particularly about the best dosage to take. If you experience any side effects that concern you, stop taking the supplement and contact your health care provider."

For more information about what the NCCAM has to say about supplements, visit <http://nccam.nih.gov/health/supplements/wiseuse.htm>.

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