

Dietary Supplements: Are They Really Good For You?

Dietary and herbal supplements are everywhere - in food, drinks, pills and powders.

Supplements, like prescription and over-the-counter products, can have side effects. As with other drugs, service members should understand the implications of taking these products.

Most dietary supplements are marketed as having a health-related benefit, such as weight loss. An important point to remember is that, in many cases, the benefits associated with a product may come with risks, so it's important to read the label, follow the recommended dosage, and heed all warnings.

Just because a product says "natural" on the label, it doesn't guarantee it's safe.

While most people may think of dietary and herbal supplements as related to other common drugs, many of these products actually fall under the umbrella of "foods", which means a different set of FDA regulations apply.

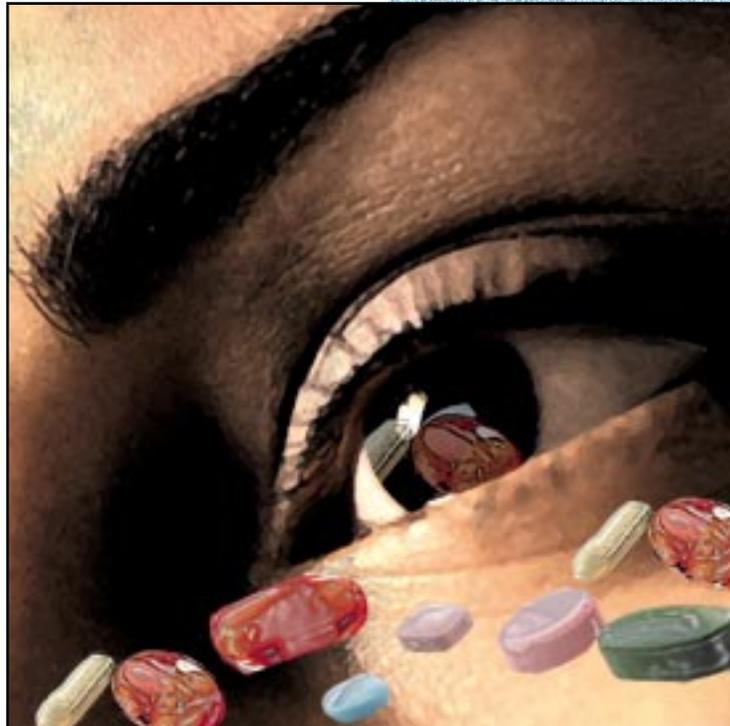
Unlike prescription and over-the-counter drugs, dietary supplements aren't required to undergo FDA testing and approval before sale. The FDA is responsible for taking action against unsafe products only after they hit the market.

According to FDA estimates, there are about 29,000 different dietary supplements available today and Americans spend an estimated \$700 million on them each year.

Like prescription and over-the-counter drugs, Navy Medicine advises personnel to review all related facts before use.

It's best to consult with your healthcare provider before starting a regimen with dietary supplements to ensure you don't experience unwanted side effects.

If you're already using these products, be sure to tell your healthcare provider, as some supplements could react with other medications.



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