



# HEALTH AWARENESS

## Five Tips To Help You Avoid Health Fraud Scams

(NAPSA)—Learning to recognize a potential health fraud scam can help you to avoid them.

Health fraud scams are a way to deceive people about health products that may not be all they're cracked up to be. They play on our desires for a quick cure, bombarding us with savvy marketing.

They try to fool us into buying health products that sound great but are really fakes. Health fraud scams can do more than waste your money. They might make you sicker or even cause death.

Using fraudulent products can delay the time it takes to get legitimate treatment for a medical condition. They can also interfere with medicines you are taking.

Health fraud scams make unproven claims about products—promising help with weight loss, sexual performance, aches, pains, memory loss and other age-related issues. They may even claim that their products can help with serious medical conditions such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's and HIV/AIDS.

While it may be tempting to believe such claims, falling for health fraud scams can have serious consequences.

The FDA offers a few tip-offs to help you spot rip-offs:

### 1. One product does it all.

Be suspicious of products that claim to cure a wide range of diseases. Many serious diseases don't have a cure despite what some companies claim.

### 2. Personal testimonials.

Success stories by "real people" or doctors are easy to make up but difficult to prove and are not a substitute for scientific proof.

**3. Quick fixes.** Be wary of talk that suggests a product can



**Be wary of a product that claims to be a miracle cure, especially if the disease or condition is serious.**

bring quick relief or provide a quick cure, especially if a condition is serious. Even with proven treatments, few diseases can be treated quickly.

**4. Don't be fooled by the term "natural."** This attention-grabbing term suggests a product is safer than conventional treatments, but many things in nature—like poisonous mushrooms and arsenic—can kill when ingested. And any product—synthetic or natural—potent enough to work like a drug is going to be potent enough to cause side effects.

**5. "Miracle cure" or "new discovery."** If a product were a cure for a serious disease, it would be widely reported in the media and regularly prescribed by health professionals, not hidden in a newspaper ad, television infomercial, website promotion or spam e-mail.

The bottom line is this: If it's an unproven or little-known treatment, talk to your doctor or health care professional before you take it for your health problem. This is especially important if you are already taking prescription drugs.

For more information on how to spot health fraud scams, visit [www.fda.gov/healthfraud](http://www.fda.gov/healthfraud).