

# Nutrition News And Notes

## Supplementing Your Health

(NAPSA)—Getting the best health care for the least amount of money is on the minds of many Americans these days. Fortunately, there are ways you can use nutrition to help support your health, and government agencies are working harder than ever to ensure the safety of consumers choosing to do so. Here's how:

**You can enhance your health easily and inexpensively with the help of dietary supplements.** According to the National Institutes of Health, "Some supplements may help ensure that you get adequate amounts of essential nutrients or help promote optimal health and performance. Scientific evidence shows that some dietary supplements are beneficial for overall health and for managing some health conditions. For example, calcium and vitamin D are important for keeping bones strong and reducing bone loss; folic acid decreases the risk of certain birth defects; and omega-3 fatty acids from fish oils might help some people with heart disease."

That may be why the number of Americans taking at least one dietary supplement a day is estimated to be more than 70 percent, according to a study published in *The Journal of Nutrition*. Multivitamins, fish oil and vitamin D are among the most popular choices.

According to a study by The Lewin Group, significant health care cost savings could be achieved if more people took nutrition supplements.

For example, if older Americans took enough calcium with vitamin D, it's possible that 776,000 hospitalizations for hip fractures could be avoided over five years, reducing the need for stays in skilled nursing facilities. During those five years, \$16.1 billion could be saved as a result.



**Supplementing your diet with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and the like may help you look and feel better longer.**

**Government agencies have increased oversight.** The supplements you get today in health food stores, grocery stores or online from major companies are manufactured under more government oversight than many people realize. Dietary supplement oversight by the U.S. government has increased dramatically over the past few years, with new laws created and regulatory agencies taking action more often against companies breaking those laws.

The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act defines supplements as a specially regulated food category. Several other laws also regulate dietary supplements, so now dietary supplement manufac-

turing is more closely regulated than most other food categories.

Both the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) have been exercising their authority over the industry very vigorously. Every dietary supplement maker now has to have strict quality programs in place to follow, called "Good Manufacturing Practices." The FDA also makes surprise visits to manufacturers to ensure they are following those rules.

In fact, many experts say, any further regulation would lead to these dietary supplements costing as much as prescription medications. What's more, these experts point to a proven track record of safety as another good reason not to regulate vitamins the way drugs are.

"The dietary supplement industry has long supported reasonable regulation, with these rules now in effect: All manufacturers must follow FDA-audited Good Manufacturing Practices requiring safety and identity testing; only FDA-approved ingredients can be used; steroid precursors and other drugs are illegal in supplements; companies must submit all complaints of serious adverse events to the FDA, which now has authority to mandate product recalls," said Neil E. Levin, CCN, DANLA, past president of the American Nutrition Association.

### Learn More

You can get more information about supplements and which, if any, would be good for you from your doctor. You can get more information about healthy lifestyles, dietary supplements and government oversight from a health advocacy group, Your Voice For Health, at [www.yvfh.org](http://www.yvfh.org).