

Health Awareness

Useful Tips For Dietary Supplement Consumers

(NAPSA)—You don't have to feel overwhelmed by the many dietary supplement products available. It helps to know the difference between a vitamin and a botanical product and what you should look for in a dietary supplement.

The United States Pharmacopeia (USP), a non-government organization that promotes the public health by establishing state-of-the-art standards to ensure the quality of medicines, dietary supplements and other health-care technologies, has put together a useful listing of definitions and tips.

Dietary Supplements

A dietary supplement, according to the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, contains one or more vitamins, minerals and botanicals, sometimes referred to as herbs, amino acids or other dietary ingredients.

Vitamins

Vitamins are organic compounds essential for normal metabolism, growth and well-being. They usually are available from food, although some can be produced synthetically.

Minerals

Minerals are found naturally in foods and are essential to many basic tasks the body must perform. They are especially important for bone structure and growth. Some minerals found naturally in foods are calcium, iron, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium and sodium. In nutritional supplements, minerals are not present in elemental form, but rather as compounds. For example, a dietary supplement product may say "ferrous sulfate," which is iron.

Botanicals and Herbals

Botanicals are substances derived from plants, while "herbal" usually refers to leaves, stems and flowers.

Teas

Products infused in water that contain herbals; botanicals or other dietary supplements. Basic teas have a standard of identity as a food product, however, some are



a combination of tea and dietary supplements.

Tips for Buying Dietary Supplements

- Verify that the product is clearly marked with an expiration date far enough in the future to enable use of the entire product. Certain vitamins or minerals lose potency with time, especially in hot and humid weather.

- Look for products that meet USP standards. By placing USP on the label, manufacturers state they have met USP standards for strength, quality (disintegration and dissolution of tablets and capsules), and purity.

- The price of a dietary supplement is not necessarily an indication of the quality of the product.

Some dietary supplements do not interact well with over-the-counter and prescription medication. If you are in doubt or have questions about the dietary supplement you are taking, consult your health care provider.

USP's DSVP

Within the coming months, consumers can find dietary supplement products on retailers' shelves that bear USP's DSVP mark. The DSVP mark tells consumers that the products have been certified to:

- Contain the ingredients declared on the product label;
- Contain the amount or strength of ingredients declared on the product label;
- Meet requirements for limits on potential contaminants; and
- Have been manufactured properly by complying with USP and proposed FDA standards for good manufacturing practices (GMPs).