

Fraudulent Dietary Supplements on the Rise

The FDA is encouraging consumers to be cautious about dietary supplements they purchase. There are many tainted and extremely dangerous products on the market claiming to be dietary supplements. Fraudulent dietary supplement claims are more often related to weight loss, sexual enhancement, and bodybuilding.

Per FDA officials, these fraudulent products have been linked with incidences of stroke, liver and kidney injury, heart palpitations, and even death. Consumers should educate themselves on identifying these products and avoid them. The FDA reported the warning signs of potentially fraudulent dietary supplements. The first warning sign is a product's claim that appears too good to be true. Other warning signs include: products claiming to be alternates to FDA approved drugs, steroids, those marketed primarily in a foreign language, or via mass email, and even those who warn consumers they will test positive in performance enhancement drug tests.

Dietary supplements are in general not required to be approved by the FDA prior to market. Therefore, the manufacturer has the responsibility to ensure their products are safe and that their claims are true. Federal regulators have found these products can contain hidden or deceptively labeled ingredients. Some of them contain ingredients similar to FDA approved drugs. However, their purity is questionable and they are typically at a much higher concentration than is considered safe. Other products contain novel synthetic steroids which do not qualify as dietary supplement ingredients.

The FDA recommends all consumers speak with their health care professional before taking these supplements. Those consumers who feel as though they may need a dietary supplement should speak with their doctor, pharmacist, or registered dietitian. Awareness and avoidance of these fraudulent dietary supplements is the best way to combat this growing problem. Consumers should remember that just because a supplement is being sold in a local retail store does not mean it is safe or effective.

Adapted from: FDA. "Beware of fraudulent "Dietary Supplements" patient handout and consumer update. <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm246744.htm>

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