HPRC

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Dietary Supplements

Red Flags – What You Need to Know to Stay Safe and Avoid Fraud

Despite growing popularity among military personnel, many dietary supplements on the market are tainted and unsafe. If you are currently using or considering using a dietary supplement, ask yourself these RED FLAG questions to minimize your risk of consuming harmful products.

☐ **Is it a high-risk dietary supplement? High-risk product categories include:**

- Bodybuilding products
- Diabetes products
- Weight-loss products
- Sexual enhancement products

☐ **Does the supplement's product label have any of the claims below? These claims often indicate that the supplement may contain substances not on the ingredients list, prescription drug analogs, or banned substances.**

- An alternative to (or claiming to have similar effects to) an FDA-approved drug—e.g., "All natural alternative to XYZ."
- "Do not take if you have any medical condition, if you are taking any prescription medications, or if you are pregnant."
- "May cause a positive result in a performance-enhancing drug test."

☐ **If the supplement makes a claim about a dietary ingredient affecting normal body structure or function (e.g., "helps promote bone health"), is its product label missing the following statement?**

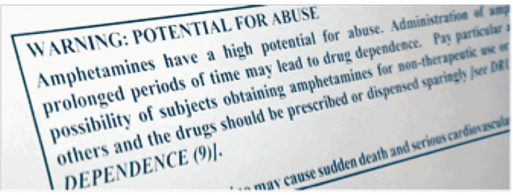
- "These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."

☐ **Does the label:**

- Claim to cure a wide range of unrelated diseases (e.g., cancer, AIDS, in addition to diabetes)?
- Promise "quick fixes" (e.g., cure XYZ in seven days, lose weight in nine days, shrink tumors in one week, cure impotency in two weeks, etc.)?

☐ **Does the label have:**

- Text in a foreign language?
- Directions or warnings that resemble FDA-approved drug products?
- Claims that it is as effective as an FDA-approved drug?
- Inadequate or absent safety warnings?
- A black-box warning?


WARNING: POTENTIAL FOR ABUSE
Amphetamines have a high potential for abuse. Administration of amp
prolonged periods of time may lead to drug dependence. Pay particular a
possibility of subjects obtaining amphetamines for non-therapeutic use or
others and the drugs should be prescribed or dispensed sparingly [see DRU
DEPENDENCE (9)].
may cause sudden death and serious cardiovascular

Sample FDA-approved black box warning label

☐ **Is the label missing a third-party certification label? Third-party verification programs evaluate and certify dietary supplements for purity and/or quality. Examples are:**

- United States Pharmacopeia (USP)
- NSF International
- Informed-Choice, HFL Sport Science
- ConsumerLab.com

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- ☐ **Is the product marketed with personal testimonials about amazing results from using the product?**
- ☐ **Did you receive solicitations (emails) offering products in the high-risk product categories?**
- ☐ **Is the product rated 7 or lower by the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database (NMCD)? The NMCD rates commercial products based on safety, effectiveness, and quality. Each product gets a rating of 1-10 with 10 being the best and 1 being the worst.**
- ☐ **Does the product contain any of the problematic ingredients below?**

5-HTP (5-Hydroxytryptophan)	Canadian hemp	Gravel root
Aconite	Catnip	Greater Celandine
Adrenal extract	Cesium	Hawaiian baby woodrose
Aga (Aminita muscaria)	Chaparral	Heartleaf (Sida cordofolia)
Alkanna	Chenopodium oil	Hemp oil
American mistletoe	Clematis	Horny goat weed (Epimedium grandiflorum)
Apricot kernel	Clubmoss	Indian snakeroot (Rauwolfia)
Aristolochia	Colloidal Silver	Jaborandi
Beth Root	Coltsfoot	Jimson weed
Bitter Orange (Synephrine)	Comfrey	Kava
Bittersweet nightshade	Country Mallow	Laminaria
Bladderwrack	DMAA (1,3 dimethylamylamine)	Lobelia
Blue Cohosh	Dolomite	Pinellia ternata
Blue Flag	Ephedra	Salvia (Diviner's sage)
Butanediol (BD)	European mandrake	Usnea or Usnic acid
Buttercup	Germanium	Vinca rosea (madagascar periwinkle)
Calamus	Gamma-butyrolactone (GBL)	Wild indigo
Calotropis	GHB (Gamma hydroxybutyrate)	Yohimbe

If you answered "YES" to several of these questions, you may be consuming an unhealthy or harmful product! Be an informed consumer and choose wisely. However, remember that a supplement cannot replace regular exercise, medical drugs, or a healthy diet.

For additional alerts, click on the links below.

Athlete Advisory - Methylhexaneamine and Dietary Supplements

Athlete Guide to the 2012 Prohibited List