

## Chapter 19 Lesson 2: Using Medicines Safely

### Introduction:

As you learned in this lesson, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tests all prescription and over-the-counter medicines in this country to make sure that they are effective and safe to use. Herbal and dietary supplements, by contrast, are regulated as “foods” and do not go through the same testing procedures. Nonetheless, some people prefer to use these “natural” remedies for minor ailments because they assume they are safer and more wholesome than “drugs.” This fact sheet from the National Consumers League has more information about dietary supplements, how they are regulated, and how to use them safely.

### Links to Explore:

#### Dietary Supplements

<http://www.nclnet.org/publications/dietsupps.pdf>

### Directions:

- Click on the link and read the fact sheet on dietary supplements.
  - Then answer the following questions:
1. Why should you talk to your doctor before taking a dietary supplement if you are also taking a prescription or over-the-counter medicine?
  2. What kind of claims cannot legally be printed on the label of a dietary supplement?
  3. What information must appear on the label of any dietary supplement?
  4. Why should you always read the label before taking a supplement?
  5. Are herbal supplements safer to use than synthetic drugs?
  6. List four guidelines for the safe use of dietary supplements.

### Answers:

1. Ingredients in some supplements may interact with medications and cause potentially serious and unwanted side effects.
2. Any claim to cure, prevent, treat, mitigate, or diagnose a specific disease
3. Supplement labels must contain the following information:
  - What the product contains
  - The serving size
  - The name and location of the manufacturer, packer, or distributor
4. To find out about any warnings, cautions, interactions, or side effects related to the product
5. No. Natural products can have the same side effects as similar products produced in a laboratory.

6. To use dietary supplements safely:
- Read the label and follow the directions.
  - Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all medicines and dietary supplements you are currently taking.
  - Know what you are taking and why you are taking it.
  - Do not take more than the recommended amount.

**Additional Links to Explore:**

Use the links below to gather additional information on the activity topic. When appropriate, have students extend their research to include important concepts contained in these Web sites.

**Overview of Dietary Supplements**

<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-overview.html>

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine**

<http://nccam.nih.gov/>

**Drugs & Dietary Supplements**

<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/menus/consumer/health/drugs.shtml>