



How Safe are Supplements?



The Food & Drug Administration (FDA) governs dietary supplements with a **different set of rules** than food or medications. The manufacturers are responsible for regulating their own product's safety and keeping labels accurate. But did you know that their products and labels do not need to be approved by the FDA?

So what protects us? Though rules are set for supplements by the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994, many supplements are backed by deceptive claims or may be harmful to the public. Consumer Reports recently released **an article** revealing that of more than 54,000 dietary supplements, "only a third had some level of safety and effectiveness supported by scientific evidence...and close to 12% have safety concerns or problems with product quality". Once a supplement on the market has been proven to be tainted, or otherwise dangerous, the FDA has the authority to step in. However, they are not allowed to enforce a mandatory recall.



The U.S. Pharmacopoeia checks the quality of voluntarily submitted supplements. If a company wants its supplement to carry the "USP Verified" seal, the product is voluntarily submitted to the **U.S. Pharmacopoeia**. There, the product's quality, purity, and potency is tested. Labels and ingredient lists are also submitted to confirm accuracy and safety.

How do we know which supplements are safe? Minimal regulation about what's hitting the shelves means you've got to be a careful consumer:



Look for "USP Verified" seal to ensure the product's quality.



Read the label. If the label seems vague, outrageous, or 'too good to be true'-- most likely it is.



Talk to your healthcare provider, registered dietician, or pharmacist. They may be able to tell you if a certain supplement may interfere with an individual health problem or prescription drug regimen.

