

Education

73% of Canadians regularly take a natural health product. Supplements are big business and advertising can make claims that are very compelling. With a little homework, you can make the best and most cost effective decisions when you purchase supplements.

All supplements sold in Canada must now be regulated through the federal government's Natural and Non-prescription Health Products Directorate (foods are regulated by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency). The review process means that you can be sure what is on the label is what is in the bottle and that health claims made by manufacturers are supported by proper evidence. Products authorized for sale in Canada have an eight-digit Natural Product Number (NPN) or Homeopathic Medicine Number (DINHM) on the label. The process of evaluating products is ongoing, so some labels will have an exemption number EN-XXXXXX indicating they have passed a preliminary review.

Did You Know?

- In the US, dietary supplements are considered food products under the Dietary Supplements Health Education Act. Claims may not be made about the use of a dietary supplement to diagnose, prevent, mitigate, treat or cure a specific disease. These products are not subject to mandatory review, approval or quality requirements, and do not go through testing for identity, purity or potency of its ingredients.

Diet

What should I look for when buying supplements?

To decide which product is right for you and is the best value, read labels carefully and check for;

Nutrient Forms are listed in parentheses next to the name of the nutrient

- For some nutrients the form is not particularly important e.g. synthetic or natural Vitamin C. For others such as Vitamin E and beta-carotene, the natural forms are recommended by many health care providers.

Remember

- Vitamin C in time release form is recommended because your body is not able to store it.

The Expiry Date

- Expiry dates will vary based on the ingredients. Be wary of buying the largest size products as it may not be a bargain to you if their shelf life expires.
- Some products require special storage such as some types of probiotics, which require refrigeration to preserve its shelf life.

Remember

- Capsules and tablets usually have a much longer shelf life than liquids.
- As a rule of thumb store all supplements and medications in a cool, dry place and out of direct sunlight.

(Avoid storing your medication and supplements over stove tops, ovens, refrigerators, or in the washroom where people take showers or baths.)



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Dosage Amount Per Serving

- You need to know what amount is right for you
- Consider if you should buy a low supplement dose and take more throughout the day or a higher dosage fewer times

CautionDid You Know?

- The complete breakdown of the minerals contained in a product is available on Health Canada; Licensed Natural Health Product Database

Preservatives, additives etc. can make up a significant part of many products

- Check to see if the product contains sugar or other sweeteners, artificial flavouring, food colouring/ dyes, and preservatives such as chlorine, shellacs, etc.
- Many products contain binders or fillers such as cellulose and product may have been treated with glidants or chemicals to help in manufacturing.

Remember

- Other countries often have much lower quality and safety standards for supplements so purchase from reputable merchants or websites.
- Good companies are proud of the quality of their products and often will have number for you to contact them or will post product information on their website.

Remember

- It is important to tell your healthcare provider about all the drugs and supplements you are taking as there can be interactions