



Supplements

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Are supplements safe?

Dietary supplements are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The makers of dietary supplements are responsible for ensuring that the dietary supplements are safe before they are marketed. Research studies on people to prove that dietary supplements are *safe* are *not* required before the supplements are available for purchase, unlike for drugs. The dietary supplement manufacturers/distributors are responsible for ensuring their products are safe and labeled accurately and truthfully.

If the FDA finds a supplement to be unsafe once it is on the market, only then can it take action against the manufacturer and/or distributor, such as by issuing a warning or requiring the product to be removed from the marketplace.

Common Cholesterol Supplements

Fish oil

Fish oil is often used for conditions related to the heart and blood system. The scientific evidence suggests that fish oil does lower high triglycerides, and it also seems to help prevent heart disease and stroke when taken in the recommended amounts. Fish oil is likely safe when taken in doses of 3 grams daily or less and typical dosages are 1-4 grams daily. If you are experiencing fish burps, freeze the capsules before consuming them.

Niacin

Niacin is a form of vitamin B3, a vitamin naturally found in many foods. Niacin is effective for lowering cholesterol, specifically triglyceride levels. However, supplement forms of niacin usually come in strengths of 250 mg or less. Typically, very high doses of niacin are required, so over the counter (otc) niacin usually isn't appropriate. If you choose to get an otc niacin supplement, you avoid the "no flush" kinds as these are not effective.

Common Blood Pressure Supplements

Co-Q 10 enzyme

Being a vitamin-like substance Coenzyme Q-10 (CoQ-10) is found throughout the body. For treating high blood pressure taking coenzyme Q-10 by itself or along with other medications seems to help lower blood pressure even more. Taking coenzyme Q-10 does not seem to decrease high cholesterol or triglycerides. Statins, drugs used to lower cholesterol, may sometimes cause muscle pain. Some evidence shows that taking coenzyme Q-10 may reduce this pain, but not all studies show positive evidence.

Garlic

Garlic in some research studies has shown to reduce blood pressure by as much as 7% or 8% in people with high blood pressure.

Flaxseed

Studies of flaxseed preparations to lower cholesterol levels report mixed results.

How do I know which supplements to buy?

- Look for an approval seal on products that have passed laboratory testing for quality, purity and contaminants.
- If you cannot tell whether the product you are purchasing meets the same standards as those used in the research studies, check with the manufacturer.
- Dietary supplement verification companies:
 - a. U.S. Pharmacopeia
 - b. Consumer Lab
 - c. NSF International

More information?

- www.nccam.nih.gov/
- www.aha.com
- www.fda.gov
- Contact your health care provider.



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