



DenverDA

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Consumer Advisory !!!

Always Question Health Supplements

To be free of pain, cured of disease, or slim and beautiful. . . such advertisements hold out hope for us all. But what actually works? Many of the claims on health products have little or no scientific proof. What we do know is that Americans spend over 40 billion dollars a year on dietary supplements, yet often end up losing more money than weight. Don't let the irresistible hype you read in advertisements derail your healthy New Year's resolutions.

Dietary supplements: Dietary supplements such as foods, vitamins, herbs, amino acids, minerals, and other remedies are big sellers this time of year. Unlike prescription and over-the-counter drugs that must be approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), dietary supplements do not, provided their health claims are not linked to a disease. There is no requirement to prove that supplements are safe or that they work. Although dietary supplements can be beneficial, the key is to know what do look for when reading ads. Watch out for the following advertising claims:

- "Miracle", "natural", "mystery" or "ancient" foods; or "special" foods that offer cures.
- Products that push supplements *as a substitute* for real food.
- Supplements that promote quick and significant weight loss - often with little or no effort
- Cures for chronic disease - diseases that have yet to be cured by medical science
- Anti-aging or beauty products that non-surgically "reverse the aging process"
- Any product that claims a "scientific breakthrough"

Before purchasing, understand the terms on all offers. Be wary of ads that offer "free trials", a "special promotion", promise a "no risk- money back guarantee"; or require advance payment. *Free trial* offers involve monthly, automatic credit card charges that are difficult to cancel. Also, beware of "testimonial overuse" in product advertising, and keep in mind that photo technology can cleverly manipulate "before" and "after" pictures.

If indeed a "miracle" food or drug existed, its cost and accessibility would be out of reach for most Americans. Such claims have been peddled by snake oil salesmen from the beginning of time. Remember: If it sounds too good to be true, it generally is!!!

For more information on consumer health scams, click on the FDA website at www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/hclaims.html. To report a complaint to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), go to www.ftc.gov and click on "complaint on line", or call the toll free number at 1-877-382-4357 (TTD: 1-866-653-4261)

Denver DA's Fraud Line: 720-913-9179

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