



## Healthy Living for Elders: Tips for Taking Dietary Supplements<sup>1</sup>

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Dietary supplements include vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other substances. If you are taking any of these products, here are some guidelines to help you use them safely:

### **Talk to Your Doctor or Pharmacist**

Speak with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any supplement for the first time. He/she can tell you:

- how much to take
- when to take it
- possible side effects
- possible interactions with other supplements or medications

Let your doctor know about any symptoms you experience after taking a supplement. Stop taking the supplement and see if the symptoms subside.

### **Buy From a Reliable Source**

Look for products with the U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP) symbol on the label. This means the product meets certain quality standards.

### **Check the Expiration Date**

Choose products that are clearly marked with an expiration date. Be sure the date is far enough in the future so you can use all of the product before it expires.

### **Buyer Beware!**

Products labeled "natural" or "organic" may or may not be safe. These may be advertising gimmicks to make you think the product is better.

Be cautious of claims that the product is an "instant cure." If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true!

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