

Natural Healing Express Weekly

Column Volume176 The "Supplement" Controversy

For those of you who know me, I save my rants for two things – aspartame and the Patriots. However, due to all the controversy in the past few weeks, I decided to add one more topic to this short list -Bad supplements.

Before this gets too out of hand -and trust me, I have heard way too many crazy things about this topic in the past three weeks; allow me to refresh your knowledge of my history in order to clarify my position.

I am a Doctor of Natural Health, I do NOT own a supplement company, nor do I advocate for ANY supplement company as a paid spokesperson, representative or otherwise. Quite simply, there is no advantage for me to say anything one way or another about "bad" or good supplements. Nor is there an obligation for me in this forum to share my knowledge. So, you might ask, why come out of the box on this touchy topic?

Mainly, because it bothers me to see folks getting ripped off. And moreso, what really gets my rants revved up is that fact that when a person begins to take supplements, it's usually for a reason. And usually it's with GOOD intention to do something GOOD for their body.

The seed for the intention may have been blown in with the trade winds, but nonetheless, something, somewhere motivated a person to try a supplement.

Maybe they saw a show on Dr. Oz that says Green Coffee Bean Extract will help you lose weight and it might just work by next week. Or perhaps they were at their local physician's office and they were told to start taking Vitamin D to help with seasonal depression. Maybe their insurance doesn't cover it at their local pharmacy, so they looked for a "cheaper" alternative somewhere else.

Perhaps they or one of their loved ones had a disease and they researched a "natural cure". Many times, a little knowledge goes a long way, or NOT. A person jumps on the computer and finds a plethora of info on whatever topic is ailing them. Then they travel off to a big box store and find just the supplement to "help".

Perhaps friend or colleague tried this or that and it worked so without even doing research on their own, they just go buy the product. Who knows how and when the journey begins that causes folks to first take supplements. But it starts somewhere and like most people, if you don't really KNOW what you are doing, one tends to want to error on the side of a LOW investment. This usually equates to "cheaper". Well, here starts my rant. Cheaper is not usually better. And if they are not the BEST, why put it into your body? And we will get into my definition of "best" in a second.

What if you have an allergy or perhaps you are one of the millions of Americans who simply cannot assimilate (digest) supplements in the first place? Might as well put the top down on the convertible and throw the money out on Highway 20. It would give you an equivalent value.

Or, God forbid, you take something that creates a contradiction. Now what? Well, here's a blip from an article recent printed in a cyclists magazine.

*Last week, the New York State attorney general's office shipped out some **cease-and-desist letters** to major supplement sellers GNC, Target, Walgreens, and Walmart to immediately stop the sale of dietary supplements that the office tested and found fraudulent. In fact, 45% of the samples they tested contained no plant DNA whatsoever. Here are a few of the attorney general's findings that are of interest to supplement-taking cyclists:*

GNC "Herbal Plus" Ginseng: *Ginseng has been touted as an "adaptogenic" herb for decades, and athletes have used it to protect themselves from stress and increase energy and endurance. Whether it works is up for debate, but it's undeniable that it won't do a thing if there's no actual ginseng in your ginseng supplement. This brand tested completely negative. No ginseng DNA was found, just a little wheat grass and Pinus strobus (eastern white pine).*

GNC "Herbal Plus" Echinacea: *Echinacea has long been popular for boosting immunity and fending off colds. Some research also suggested that high doses could improve oxygen-carrying capacity and have an "EPO effect" for endurance athletes. That's been called into question, as have some of the actual supplements—like this one. It yielded traces of buttercup and pine DNA in a few tests, absolutely no plant DNA in others, and no Echinacea in any.*

Target "Up & Up" Gingko Biloba: *Gingko is generally taken as a memory-enhancing supplement, but some research has suggested it also could improve endurance and reduce fatigue, especially when combined with rhodiola (another herbal supplement). This batch tested mostly negative for any plant DNA. A little rice and mung bean showed up in a few tests, but no gingko.*

Target "Up & Up" Valerian Root: *Valerian is primarily used as a sleep aid, as some research indicates it can reduce the time it takes to fall asleep and improve the quality of your slumber. Studies are mixed and there's a question about the safety of its long-term use. This brand turned up plenty of plant matter—wild carrot, saw palmetto, beans, asparagus, and peas—just no valerian.*

This isn't to say all supplements are harmful or sketchy. But it does bring the old "buyer beware" message to the forefront. In the case of many such supplements with no real track record, if you're looking for a performance boost, you're likely best served to leave the bottles on the shelves and spend your cash on some nice new gear and coaching services.

**After note: Naturally this story fired up the supplement industry, which fired back, saying that DNA barcoding is an inappropriate method to validate herbal supplements. Botanical scientists argue that DNA testing is unable to properly identify complex herbal extracts because the DNA doesn't get through the extraction process. Some watchdog scientists also argue that DNA testing is inadequate because it doesn't identify dangerous ingredients like methamphetamine in sports supplements. More testing is*

underway by the United Natural Products Alliance. So stay tuned. The bottom line here is that regulation is sorely needed in this highly unregulated industry.

So, what do I have to say to that? Well, it's pretty dang simple. BAD SUPPLEMENTS SUCK!

At Natural Healing Express, I personally research each and every brand that we carry and check them many times a year. We do NOT marry up to any specific brand and certainly do not feel pressured to carry a "whole Line" of products simple. We carry four and five of several brands that we know cut that muster. Or, in a few specific instances, I might one carry ONE product from a specific company.

We are enormously critical on our suppliers manufacturing processes. Why? Because I need to know that they are not being placed in capsules that you simply cannot digest. And, I NEED to know that what is on the label is IN the product. And I refuse to pay for the "marketing", I want to pay for the performance. If it doesn't work, it doesn't go on the shelf.

People often ask us why we get great results in short time periods. Number one, we are SERVICES oriented. We ask that you learn your own BIO-Individuality so that you can make your own great choices. Part of that is helping you understand what works for YOUR system. We start with Nutrition. Yes, call us old fashioned, but we still believe that instead of taking a bunch of bad supplements, that you can actually help yourself by choosing nutritious food that works wonders for the body.

And, if needed, we back it up with the BEST supplements available for the task at hand. So, what do I mean by best. Here is goes – The BEST supplement needs to have the herb I am looking for in it. It needs to be balanced and easy to assimilate. It needs to be as pure as possible. It needs to have a GREAT manufacturing process. We prefer that the manufacturing company has already conducted and proven themselves to be up to FDA standards. It needs to be readily available (yes, there can be a wait sometimes) and it needs to be FAIRLY priced. So, as you might suspect. At NHE, we do the "hard" work for you.

If you feel you are confused over your supplements, bring them in and we will help you sort them out.

RANT OVER. Carry on.

Enjoy! Hope to see you soon and as always, please contact us via one of the following methods. Natural Healing Express: Phone 815 990 8732, email: skscham@aol.com 204 W Main St, Lena, IL 61048.

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