

# The Natural Pharmacy Newsletter

*Wellspring Custom Pharmacy*

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## *In The News*

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### **Why It Matters Where You Buy Your Supplements**

When it comes to patient care, I try not to be biased in my recommendations. I read a recent article in *Drug Topics* that made me think that by not being more biased toward the products that we carry may be detrimental to your health as a patient. In this article I'll try to present the information cited in the article entitled "Vitamins and Dietary Supplements-Why Pharmacist's Recommendations Matter" and let you decide if you make the right decision when you purchase supplements from Wellspring Custom Pharmacy.



Americans are aging and increasingly turning to vitamins and herbal supplements to prevent, augment, or replace their prescription drugs. Many times these consumers don't realize the implications of their choice and perceive these supplements as innocuous products with little, if any, downside. The fact of the matter is, however, vitamins and dietary supplements can have toxic and life-threatening side effects when improperly dosed or used incorrectly with prescription medication.

Annual sales of dietary supplements have reached \$25 billion, a figure that has increased 8% since 2007. Approximately 50% of adults regularly take vitamin supplements, and approximately 25% take herbal supplements at least occasionally. This has led to a call for more regulation by the FDA with the new "food safety" bill now close to a vote in the Senate. In some respects this may be beneficial to the consumer because it would allow the FDA to recall supplements it deemed dangerous. This would help prevent situations similar to what occurred with ephedra. In 2001 64% of all adverse events caused by supplements were caused by ephedra even though it represented only 1% of all supplement sales.

As part of a Congressional investigation in May of this year, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report on supplement purity. Of the 40 supplements it tested, 16 (40%) of them contained pesticide residue above the allowable limit.

Is more FDA and government control the answer-probably not. Many prescription products brought to the market and approved by the FDA are later recalled because of severe and sometimes life-threatening side effects. More control might also "squeeze" out small manufacturers that could not afford the legal red tape brought on by more regulation. And depending on the depth of regulation, the cost might be such that only large pharmaceutical companies could afford to be in the business.

Manufacturing safety is currently governed by “current good manufacturing practices” (CGMP or GMP). These federal regulations require that dietary supplement companies submit any report received about a serious adverse event to the FDA. It also gave the FDA more control over truth-in-advertising and allowed them to make inspections to help insure that manufacturers were complying with CGMP requirements.

While supplements such as fish oil have known benefit, even proponents have concern about potential contaminants. Fish oils can contain contaminants that have been shown to have adverse effects on humans. Some brands can contain unsafe levels of dioxin, furan, pesticides, mercury, and unsafe levels of PCB’s. Potency and safety should be verifiable by the manufacturer and assays available on request.

With sales of dietary supplements continuing to grow along with an aging population it is of continuing importance that you know and trust the person that you buy supplements from. Now, more than ever, you as a consumer interested in personal health and wellness must be an advocate for your own health. We hope that you continue to view us as knowledgeable health professionals that *always* will place your health ahead of sales. Likewise, when you make your choice as to where to purchase your supplements, we hope you will choose our office. It not only helps insure our viability as a business but also the quality of the product we help you choose.

## Vitamin B12 May Protect Against Alzheimer’s Disease

New research published in *Neurology* indicates that vitamin B12 may reduce the risk of Alzheimer’s disease (AD). In a seven year study, blood samples were taken from 271 elderly patients without Alzheimer’s. They were tested for homocysteine, which has been linked to Alzheimer’s, and holotranscobalamin, the active portion of vitamin B12. Vitamin B12 has previously been shown to reduce homocysteine levels. Patients in this study that had the highest vitamin B12 levels were the least likely to develop Alzheimer’s. It was also found that

increasing homocysteine levels increased risk of Alzheimer’s while increasing holotranscobalamin reduced risk.

## Potential Dangers in Your Cosmetics

Considering that your skin is easily penetrated, and many of the cosmetics that you use daily can easily be absorbed through the skin and into your bloodstream, it’s important to know if the ingredients are potentially toxic.

Americans spent \$50 billion on cosmetics in 2009. If we count the number of products that we use on a daily basis, some might find that they use 10-20 products per day. By using cosmetics on a daily basis it is not unusual to absorb as much as five pounds of carcinogens, pesticides, endocrine disrupters, and reproductive toxins per year.

Of the 10,500 ingredients used in cosmetics only 11 percent have been reviewed for safety. 90% of those ingredients used regularly in the U.S. have not been reviewed for safety. With these facts in mind consider carefully the products and number of products you choose to use.

*Merry Christmas!*  
*from the Wellspring Pharmacy Staff*



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