

Chatting with The Good Dr. Laura Shook  
September 2010

Did you see the September 2010 issue of Consumer Report? There is an excellent article on the safety and dangers of taking nutritional supplements. They offer a list of 12 supplements you should avoid and 11 supplements possibly worth considering. Consumer report discusses the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), labeling, imports from China and unsubstantiated health claims. They wisely point out that just because a supplement is labeled “natural” that doesn’t necessarily mean it is safe. Many an athlete has had their career damaged when their “natural supplement” lead them to test positive for steroids. Sure there is more to the wise consumption of supplements than can be fitted into one article but generally speaking it is a good article and I recommend you read it.

It is important to remember that just because a product, (powder, potion or pill) has received FDA approval that doesn’t make that product 100% safe for everyone. Aspirin, Advil and other Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAID) can cause serious stomach bleeding long before any tummy discomfort is felt. Cold medicines can strain the heart. Tylenol (generic name Acetaminophen) can easily damage your liver. Antibiotics can alter hormone levels and reduce the effectiveness of birth control pill. Cholesterol lowering drugs can cause muscle aches and pains which can really throw a wrench into the diet and exercise plan recommended to lower cholesterol.

Almost anything you might ingest can kill you if you try hard enough, have an allergy to or develop sensitivity for the substance. Too much water will damage your kidneys. Licorice can raise blood pressure, so people with heart disease, liver disease and hypertension should avoid licorice. An allergy or sensitivity to artificial sweeteners can cause seizures, migraines and other neurological funkiness. Let us not go into the digestive distress experienced when the lactose/milk sugar intolerant go on a cheese binge.

What is a person to do? Educate yourself, read labels and package inserts paying particular attention to warnings and adverse reactions. If you are taking prescription medication or being treated for any health condition consult with your pharmacist or medical doctor before taking nutritional supplements or making drastic changes to your diet. Pay attention to what you are putting into your body and how your body is responding. When searching for information on-line be sure to check out the US national Library of Medicine at [www.pubmed.com](http://www.pubmed.com) or perhaps go to the Mayo Clinic website and see what they have to say. I always like to check in with Dr. Andrew Weil at [www.drweil.com](http://www.drweil.com) for a perspective that includes both conventional and alternative medicine.

It would be lovely, and just a bit “Sci-Fi”, if there was a miracle potion we could take to safely loose unwanted pound, build muscle mass or increase virility but for the most part that magic pill is only going to work if you also exercise regularly, eat a healthy diet, manage stress and avoid substances you know are bad for you.

Dr. Laura L. Shook is a chiropractor with an office located near downtown Wichita KS. She can be reached by phone at (316)267-6522 or by email to [gooddrlaura@cox.net](mailto:gooddrlaura@cox.net)