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Review: Office of Dietary Supplements “Frequently Asked Questions”

http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/Health_Information/ODS_Frequently_Asked_Questions.aspx

The goal of the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is to promote research and disseminate credible scientific information from reliable sources related to dietary supplements. Dietary supplements are defined as vitamins and minerals, herbs, botanicals and other substances. The “Frequently Asked Questions” section of the Web site provides answers to common consumer questions.

The questions are divided into six sections including: 1) Use and Safety of Dietary supplements; 2) Purchasing Dietary Supplements; 3) Regulatory Information; 4) Dietary Supplement Sales and Market Data; 5) Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) Web site Materials and Link Requests; and 6) Media Inquiries. As a disclaimer, consumers are reminded that dietary supplements are “not intended to treat, diagnose, mitigate, prevent, or cure disease” and encouraged to always check with their health care provider before taking a supplement.

The site provides credible and reliable resources and is user-friendly with quick access to specific questions and appropriate answers that are easy to find and to understand. The target audience is the consumer of dietary supplements. The sections on “Use and Safety of Dietary Supplements and “Purchasing Dietary Supplements” may be particularly useful to consumers. These sections contain information on how to find answers to common questions on safety and efficacy, indications, standardization of products, supplement claims, where to report a complaint, and brands to purchase.

The information may also be helpful as background information for health professionals and manufacturers of dietary supplements, or as consumer education material. Health professionals and manufacturers may especially find the sections on “Regulatory Information”, “Dietary Supplement Sales and Market Data”, and “Media Inquiries” as helpful. One disadvantage is that a printer-friendly version of the information on the Web page is not available. The site also includes resources for additional information on dietary supplements including, links to the International Bibliographic Information on Dietary Supplements (IBIDS), references to other documents and Web sites (such as Pub Med or Medline Plus) and contact information for the regulatory agency for dietary supplements, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The “Media Inquiries” Section refers to the Media Resources and Contacts” page of the web site which provides links to the “Dietary Supplement Fact Sheets” Web page, databases and other resources and also access to information on ODS Conferences and

Workshops, announcements, updates and news releases related to dietary supplements and bibliographic databases, and contacts for other federal government offices.