

## Memorandum

TO: Diabetes Care and Education Dietetic Practice Group (DCE DPG) members

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TOPIC: Reproduction of the education handout *Diabetes and Dietary Supplements*

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# Diabetes and Dietary Supplements

## Do Ask, Do Tell

*Do you take dietary supplements? If so, you aren't alone. Studies show that people with diabetes are twice as likely to use dietary supplements as people without diabetes.*

You might also have something else in common: You may not tell your health care providers that you take supplements and which ones you take. However, to be fair, many health care providers don't ask.

This **don't tell, don't ask** policy isn't healthy for you. It's also not helpful to your health care providers. If they don't know what you take, they can't let you know about the possible helpful or harmful side effects or potential interactions with the prescription medicines you take. Learn what to **tell** and what to **ask** about dietary supplements.

### Dietary Supplements Defined

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) puts vitamins, minerals, herbs and botanicals in the category of dietary supplements. They aren't food. Nor are they prescribed medicines. Their role is to "supplement"—be taken along

with—the foods you eat and the medicines you take.

Dietary supplements are considered within complementary and alternative medicine. *Complementary* means "used together with." *Alternative* means "used instead of" standard medical practice.

### First, Eat Healthy

A key to staying healthy with diabetes is to eat healthful and regular meals. Meals should include a wide variety of nutrition-packed foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy foods, lean meats, and healthy fats and oils, such as olive, canola and soybean oil. If you choose a wide variety of healthful foods and eat at least 1,600 calories a day, you will likely meet your vitamin and mineral needs. However, in today's fast-paced world, eating healthy can be challenging. Many people struggle to eat balanced meals that include foods from the various food groups, even with the best intentions.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans state that many people may not get enough calcium, potassium,



magnesium, Vitamins A, C, and E, and fiber. In addition, research has shown that many children and adults do not get sufficient Vitamin D. For this reason, some people may consider taking a dietary supplement.

### When to Consider Supplements?

While taking supplements does not replace healthy eating or being physically active, there may be times when you need or want to take a dietary supplement.

A dietary supplement may be appropriate if:

- Your blood glucose is often too high
- You eat fewer than 1,600 calories a day because you may be trying to lose weight
- You avoid certain foods due to a food allergy or you are not able to tolerate them
- You take medicines that interact with certain vitamins or minerals

## Do Tell


Not telling your health care providers about the dietary supplements you take can be dangerous to your health. Do tell your health care providers everything you take, including prescribed and over-the-counter medicines and dietary supplements. Tell, even if you aren't asked.

## Do Ask

Do ask your health care provider's advice before you take a dietary supplement. Get your questions answered by your health care provider or another reliable resource, such as a registered dietitian or pharmacist.

## Questions you should ask:

- Is there any evidence that this supplement can improve my diabetes control and my health?
- Is there reliable research about the supplement's benefits?
- Is it known whether this supplement is safe for me?
- Could the supplement interact with any other medicine I take or medical conditions I have?
- How much should I take and how often?
- Are there any known side effects that I should be aware of?
- Are there situations when I should stop taking it?
- How can I tell if the supplement is improving my health?



*Sample structure-function claim and FDA required wording*

When you need to perform your best, take ginseng.\* This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

DIRECTIONS FOR USE: Take one capsule daily.

<b>Supplement Facts</b>	
Serving Size 1 Capsule	
<b>Amount per Capsule</b>	
Oriental Ginseng, powdered (root)	250 mcg*
*daily value not established	
Other ingredients: Gelatin, water and glycerin.	
ABC Company Anywhere, MD 00001	

*Directions*

*Supplement Facts Panel*

*Other ingredients in descending order of predominance and by common name or proprietary blend.*

*Name and place of business of manufacturer, packer or distributor. This is the address to contact for more product information.*

## To Learn More

FDA: Tips For The Savvy Supplement User: Making Informed Decisions and Evaluating Information.

[www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-savvy.html](http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/ds-savvy.html)  
(in English and Spanish)

What's in the Bottle: An Introduction to Dietary Supplements.

<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/bottle>  
(in English and Spanish)

National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine  
NCCAM Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 7923,  
Gaithersburg, MD 20898

[www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov) or call  
(888) 644-6226

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For more information: Contact the American Dietetic Association at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org).

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and Education**

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**eat right.** American Dietetic Association