



For Official Use Only (For Internal Use Only)

Operation Supplement Safety (OPSS)

Communication Guidance Card

2 Nov 2017 • When in doubt, call Ms. Alaine Mills

Health Promotion Dietitian, JB Charleston, (843) 963-4087

Note To Leadership:

[Operation Supplement Safety \(OPSS\)](#) is the DoD campaign that educates and informs the warfighter and healthcare provider on responsible dietary supplement use. We NEED leadership support to spread the word on supplement safety! Many supplement users are misinformed about the potential consequences and side effects of using some of these products.

Key Messages:

- *FDA does NOT approve dietary supplements for safety and effectiveness.* Anyone can market a product without having to prove it is safe, effective, or free from adulterants.
- *If you use supplements, stick with brands that have undergone “third party certification” (e.g. USP, Informed Choice, NSF Intl, ConsumerLab.com)* Third party certification does not guarantee the supplement is safe or effective, but validates manufacturing practices, purity, and/or quality
- *Stay educated!* You need to police what goes in your body. Use OPSS for tips and be especially suspicious for [red flag “high-risk supplements”](#)
- *Avoid “Stacking”!* Using multiple similar-acting supplements (including energy drinks) is especially hazardous.

Background Information:

- Dietary supplement = any product intended to “supplement” the diet by increasing total dietary intake. This includes pills, capsules, gel-caps, powders, liquids, bars, sprays, gums, gels, etc.
- FDA received 6,307 dietary supplement adverse event reports from 2008–2011, including 92 deaths (Source: [GAO Report](#), Mar 2013)
- One-third of Airmen reported using “legal body-building supplements” in past year, including 15% using daily (Source: [2011 DoD Health Related Behaviors Survey](#))
- Most common reasons for using supplements: build muscle, lose weight and increase energy

Common Myths About Supplements:

- *“I can safely drop 25lbs in a week.”*
- *“It’s sold at the Exchange, so it must be safe.”*
FACT: FDA does not validate safety of supplements
- *“If one dose (or drink) is good, then two or three are even better.”*
- *“Proper nutrition and physical activity now comes in pill form.”*
- *“If it’s on the label, it must be true.”*
- *“Supplements won’t cause me to have a positive drug test.”*
FACT: Supplements may be adulterated with prescription and illegal drugs!

You Can:

- Help spread the Key Messages on supplement safety
- Emphasize education and [responsible](#) use of supplements
- Encourage your Airmen to use the [OPSS website](#)

What to Avoid:

- Overgeneralizing: *“All dietary supplements are bad.”*
Supplements are often not necessary to live healthy, but they may be effective in some instances if used responsibly

Programs and Services That Can Help:

Your Installation Dietitian and Health Promotion Program
[DoD Operation Supplement Safety Campaign](#)
[The Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database](#)
[Food and Drug Administration Dietary Supplements Information](#)