

Let's Talk About...

Dietary Supplements

What are dietary supplements?

Dietary supplements are products that may contain an ingredient to help complete your diet. These can be pills, liquids, powders, or capsules that have one or more of these ingredients:

- Vitamins
- Minerals
- Probiotics
- Enzymes
- Herbs or other plant products
- Extracts
- Metabolites

What are they used for?

Dietary supplements may improve your child's symptoms or support good health. Dietary supplements can be used with standard medical treatments. **Primary Children's Hospital doesn't support the use of dietary supplements unless your child's doctor or dietitian has said they are not harmful.**

Using supplements in the hospital

Your child's doctor or dietitian may order supplements from the hospital pharmacy. These might include probiotics, vitamins, digestive enzymes, or fish oil.

- **The hospital pharmacy only has supplements that are approved by the hospital for use with standard medical treatments.** In order to be approved, supplements must be reliable, safe, and provide benefit your child. The pharmacy does not stock other supplements that you may want to use.
- **Wait before giving your child any supplements not ordered or recommended by your child's doctor.** Talk with your child's doctor, dietitian, or pharmacist first. **Some supplements are not safe for your child to take with certain medicines. Some supplements may also be harmful to a sick child.**
- **Tell your child's doctor and other healthcare providers** about any supplements your child takes. Show bottles or packages of your child's supplements to them. They will see if there are any safety concerns.

Supplement Safety

Dietary supplements can be safe and helpful when taken as ordered or recommended by your child's doctor or dietitian. After talking with your child's healthcare providers about other supplements you may want to use, here's how to keep your child safe:

- **Use high-quality supplements.** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) tests medicines for quality, but they don't test supplements. This means some products might not work well in your child's body or might be harmful.
 - **Ask your child's doctor, dietitian, or pharmacist to help you know how to choose high-quality brands**
- **Give only the amount recommended by your child's healthcare providers.** Some children can get too much of a supplement. For example, too much iron can harm your child. Make sure you know how much you give your child in each dose. The amount that's right for them depends on their age, weight, health problems, and other medicines.
 - **Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or dietitian to help make sure you're giving the right amount**
- **Put supplements in a safe place.** Most supplements are not required to have child-proof packaging. Just because a supplement doesn't have child-proof packaging doesn't mean it's safe for children.
 - **Keep supplements out of reach of children**

If you have questions, please ask!

- Ask to speak with a member of the hospital's Integrative Medicine team.
- Talk with your doctor, dietitian, or pharmacist.
- Talk with the hospital's medical librarians. They can help you find more information on supplements from trusted books or websites.

Learn more

You can find more information about dietary supplements on the Internet and from books—but **make sure you visit reliable websites or get an accurate book**. Not all information in books and on the Internet can be trusted.

Some good websites include:

- **National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health**
 - nccih.nih.gov/health/dietary-and-herbal-supplements
- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**
 - fda.gov/food/dietary-supplements
- **U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention**
 - usp.org/dietary-supplements-herbal-medicines
- **Medline Plus**
 - medlineplus.gov/druginformation.html

Some good books include:

- ***The Holistic Pediatrician***, by Kathi J. Kemper, MD, MPH
- ***Treatment Alternatives for Children***, by Lawrence Rosen, MD and Jeff Cohen

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