



August 27, 2016 – Grand Rapids, MI

Supplement Ingredient Follow-up

The Consumer Report messages on supplements also brought out the responses. There were a few that I thought I should write about to bring about some clarity on the topic.

From the list of “15 Supplement Ingredients to Always Avoid,” I wrote about only green tea extract in depth and mentioned caffeine powder. Most were herbs that are not found in conventional supplements such as multivitamins or coenzyme Q10. What seems to be a characteristic of most herbs on the list is that they cause liver and kidney damage when not used properly such as comfrey, kava, and usnic acid. “Used properly” is the key; as I wrote about in [Vitamins, Minerals, Herbs, and Other Supplements](#), unless you’re getting these types of herbs from a master herbalist, I wouldn’t take them. Making a poultice from herbs someone collected or even grew is different than what might be found in a dietary supplement in a store.



Methylsynephrine is a pharmaceutical, the synthetic form of synephrine, a chemical cousin of the stimulant ephedrine. Back in April 2016, the FDA warned companies using it that it does not comply with the definition of a supplement and therefore should be removed from products.

Red yeast rice is often recommended for lowering cholesterol, even by physicians. The problem is that it contains similar chemical properties to statin medications and can therefore cause the same problems, including muscle pain, muscle damage, and fatigue. Odds are that if your physician put you on a statin to lower cholesterol and you responded with muscle issues, it would happen with the red yeast rice as well.

This really clarifies a point I try to make when talking about herbs. Herbs are more like pharmaceuticals than like nutrients such as vitamins and minerals. You can live your entire life without taking a single herb, but you cannot live without vitamins and minerals. Yes, phytonutrients are also essential from plants we eat; as part of a plant concentrate, that’s reasonable. But herbs contain more than just beneficial phytonutrients; they contain chemicals which are being tested for their pharmaceutical properties. You should always proceed with caution.

I hope that clarifies things a little. I’ll keep my eyes open for the next science-by-headline and let you know what’s real and what’s not.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

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