

Supplements & Medicine FAQ

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Does PCC have a standard for the supplements and medicines it sells?

PCC developed its [standard for supplements](#), vitamins, and any products that serve a medicinal function, to ensure all the items we sell are high quality and minimize the presence of potentially harmful additives, ingredients, and materials. We require that the supplements and vitamins we sell are free of artificial dyes, preservatives, flavors, and sweeteners. We also give preference to locally made products that contain herbs and plants grown organically or wild-harvested in a responsible manner.

Who regulates supplements in the United States?

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates dietary supplements and their ingredients from being adulterated or misbranded. Unlike drugs regulated under the FDA, there are no requirements for safety verification or approval prior to releasing a product on the market.ⁱ The FDA's interaction with a product generally begins after it has been introduced to the marketplace and the agency is responsible for taking action against products on the market that are adulterated or misbranded. Given the current system where the FDA doesn't have much oversight until after a product is already on store shelves, the dietary supplements and vitamins industry is often referred to as being unregulated and the FDA is criticized for not playing a stronger regulatory role in making sure these products are safe and effective before they're sold to consumers.

Are non-synthetic forms of vitamins and supplements safer than synthetic ones?

Expert opinions and the science are mixed on the safety of synthetic versus non-synthetic forms of vitamins.ⁱⁱ The evidence of whether synthetic vitamins are similarly absorbed is mixed as well.ⁱⁱⁱ Synthetic nutrients are chemically identical to their naturally occurring counterparts, but they are made artificially in a lab or industrial manufacturing facility. Synthetic forms are usually cheaper and easier for formulating. PCC supports non-synthetic forms of vitamins, especially where evidence is stronger in favor of natural sources for a particular nutrient, like vitamin E. Dietary supplements obtained from whole plants and processed correctly to retain nutrient value can be expensive and are often larger in size, which can be difficult for some. In an effort to provide options to customers, PCC offers some products that contain some synthetic vitamins. All products sold at PCC clearly state the vitamin form and many brands that pride themselves on making their vitamins from whole foods or natural sources advertise this fact clearly on their packaging.

How does PCC handle common allergens in supplements?

Like food, supplements and vitamins must disclose if they contain any major allergens outlined in the FDA regulations, such as soy, eggs, or wheat. All products PCC sells should be clearly labelled with their contents and ingredients to help shoppers identify any allergens. Additionally, we do not allow any carrier oils that are common allergens, like wheat germ or soybean oils.

Does PCC do any third-party testing of its Private Label supplements?

PCC doesn't conduct third-party testing. That being said, all vitamins and supplements sold at PCC follow [Current Good Manufacturing Practices](#) (CGMPs). Our Private Label supplements are made by [Vitamer](#), which is certified to CGMPs by the National Products Association (NPA). NPA certification covers all requirements of the CGMPs as well as certain additional factors not required by the FDA. The Vitamer facility also is registered and inspected by the FDA for pharmaceutical manufacturing, an added layer of quality standards. To meet CGMP standards, even without third-party verification, regular inspections and documentations are required by the FDA. Companies such as Vitamer go the extra step and add a third-party certification, in this case NPA verification.

ⁱ Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition, "What You Need to Know about Dietary Supplements," Food & Drug Administration (FDA) (FDA, February 24, 2020), <https://www.fda.gov/food/buy-store-serve-safe-food/what-you-need-know-about-dietary-supplements>.

ⁱⁱ "Do Vitamins in Pills Differ from Those in Food?," Scientific American, accessed April 13, 2021, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/do-vitamins-in-pills-diff/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ "Synthetic vs Natural Nutrients: Does It Matter?," Healthline, August 17, 2016, <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/synthetic-vs-natural-nutrients>.