

# Things Vitamin Cottage Does NOT Carry & Why

It is our policy to carry products that are safe and health promoting. Here are the reasons we have decided to keep certain foods, supplements, or health care items out of our stores.

## SUPPLEMENTS

**Androstenedione:** Androstenedione is a metabolite of DHEA and the precursor to testosterone, the hormone responsible for making the male body masculine. An increase in testosterone levels can cause the same side effects as androgenic-anabolic supplements (such as steroids and growth hormone). Some effects include muscle tightness, cramps, increased body weight, acne, gastrointestinal problems, changes in libido, lower HDL (good) cholesterol counts, higher risk of prostate disease, liver damage, and dependence. Additionally, to date, there are no published studies indicating that supplemental androstenedione increases human muscle mass or strength.<sup>1</sup>

**Chaparral:** There have been sporadic reports of people developing liver or kidney problems after taking chaparral, particularly in capsules. This herb should only be taken internally when under a physician's supervision.<sup>2</sup>

**Colloidal Silver:** Although silver is an effective antimicrobial agent, the concentrations required for any systemic effects are not likely to be obtained safely with oral administration. Additionally, silver can accumulate in the body's tissues and cause a disfiguring skin condition called *argyria*. Medical literature shows that neurological problems may develop with long-term use of oral silver products. Keep in mind that none of the beneficial claims of silver supplementation have been proven. Also, silver is not an essential mineral for humans.<sup>3,4</sup>

**Comfrey, internal sources:** These plants contain *pyrrolizidine alkaloids*, substances that are established to be hepatotoxins (toxins to the liver) in animals. The pyrrolizidine alkaloids that are present in comfrey have also been shown to be toxic to other tissues as well. There is also evidence that implicates these substances as carcinogens.<sup>5</sup>

**DHEA:** This hormone produced by the adrenal glands has many regulatory functions in the body. These actions are best accomplished when DHEA is naturally produced. There are numerous potential side effects with using supplemental DHEA. For example, it can promote tumor growth, encourage liver toxicity, and disrupt hormonal balance, which can produce a wide range of symptoms including mustaches on women. Self-diagnosis of low DHEA levels and self-prescribed supplementation is inappropriate and can be harmful. A doctor trained in the uses of DHEA should regulate the intake of this supplement. Refer to *What your Doctor May Not Tell you About Menopause* by Dr. John Lee. **7-KETO** (3-acetyl-7-oxo-dehydroepandrosterone) is a naturally occurring metabolite (breakdown product) of the hormone DHEA (dehydroepandrosterone), which we also do not carry due to the reasons stated above.

**EAS sport supplements:** These products contain hydrogenated vegetable oils and artificial sweeteners. Therefore, we do not carry these products. Please refer to the sections below to find out more about these ingredients.

**EDTA:** EDTA (ethylenediamine tetra-acetic acid) is a synthetic amino acid used in chelation therapy. This therapy is done by administering repeated doses of EDTA to gradually reduce atherosclerotic plaque and other mineral deposits throughout the cardiovascular system.<sup>6</sup> Despite the debate between intravenous and oral administration of this substance, Vitamin Cottage feels the use of either should be medically supervised by a trained physician. Lab tests should be done to assess toxic levels and if the EDTA treatments are working. Taking the therapy when not needed may cause bodily damage. Furthermore, EDTA is a mineral chelator and removes minerals indiscriminately. This means that it may remove essential minerals needed for proper nutrition.

**Ephedra in weight loss, energy, or sport nutrition products:** The use of dietary supplements that contain ephedra alkaloids may pose a health risk to some persons. Sensitivities to this particular herb are hard to predict. We feel that this herb is best used under a doctor's supervision when addressing issues of weight, energy, or performance. Ephedra's stimulatory effect can result in a number of negative side effects, such as dizziness, headaches, insomnia, elevated blood pressure with an extra demand on the heart, muscle disturbances, dry mouth, nervousness, sleep disturbances, weakened digestion, and heart palpitations. Since this herb may have some value for asthma and other respiratory conditions, we still carry formulations that contain ephedra that support these issues.<sup>7,8</sup>

**Ephedra:** As if April 12, 2004, the FDA ruled that it will no longer be legal to sell dietary supplements that contain ephedrine group alkaloids because they determined it presents an unreasonable risk of illness or injury. The confusing part is what products this rule will effect. Chinese herbal remedies are exempted and the rule "generally does not apply to products like herbal teas or conventional foods that contain ephedrine alkaloids." The rule applies to all dietary supplements that contain a source of ephedrine alkaloids, such as ephedra, Ma huang, Sida cordifolia and pinellia. Additionally, dietary supplements that contain pseudoephedrine from ephedra or some other source are not banned. Essentially, the FDA has banned ephedra as an ingredient, not a dietary supplement in and of itself.

**Germanium:** Supplementation with germanium, a natural occurring element, has resulted in renal, hepatic, and neurologic toxicities. Although acute toxicity studies in animals reveal low potential for toxicity, low-dose chronic toxicity has been demonstrated repeatedly.<sup>9,10,11</sup>

**Glycols:** There are three glycols occasionally added to supplements that Vitamin Cottage does not approve: Polyethylene glycol (PEG), propylene glycol, and propylene glycol alginate. PEG is a product of petroleum gas or dehydration of alcohol. Implants of large amounts in rats caused cancer. Ingestion of large oral doses has produced kidney and liver damage. Propylene Glycol in large oral doses in animals has been reported to cause central nervous system depression and slight kidney changes. Propylene Glycol Alginate is similar to propylene glycol but derived from seaweed.<sup>23</sup>

**Graviola:** Graviola (*Annona muricata*) is a plant that is being promoted as having an anticancer effect but at this time there is no research or clinical trials available proving the safety or efficacy of this plant. Graviola contains a cytotoxic (cell-toxic) phytochemical (plant compound) called acetogenin. Acetogenin, although found in small amounts in graviola, is toxic to rapidly dividing cells and should be monitored for this effect as chemotherapy is monitored. Additionally, there is some evidence that consumption of (the fruit and infusions) of graviola is linked to an increased incidence of Parkinson. Providing a toxic plant for consumption as a cancer treatment is not the goal of Vitamin Cottage. Vitamin Cottage provides products to improve overall function and promote optimal health so the body can heal itself.

**Human Growth Hormone (hGH):** This is a pituitary hormone involved in growth and repair of organs and tissues. It is being touted as an anti-aging therapy. However there have been no studies on oral hGH products. Side effects of supplementing this hormone can include joint pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, bloating, edema, breast tenderness in men, diabetes, and possibly lead to prostate problems. However, we do carry homeopathic versions by *Liddell* and *Renewal* that are safe.<sup>12</sup>

**Iron oxide:** Oxygen, oxidation, and free radicals are essential to health. However, uncontrolled free radicals will lead to physical damage and disease. A common example of damaging oxidation occurs when oxygen combines with the element iron to create iron oxide, better known as rust. Even though iron is essential to body function, too much combined with poor antioxidant defense, due to poor intake of antioxidants, can put someone at a higher risk of increased oxidative stress, which is believed to be the culprit in a number of health conditions. If iron supplementation is needed, non-oxidized forms of iron (e.g. fumarate, gluconate, glycinate) are recommended.<sup>13</sup>

**Limited weight loss supplements:** We have also limited the number of weight loss and energy enhancing products on our shelves that contain ingredients that may be harmful to some individuals, such as kola nut, citrus aurantium extract, pseudoephedrine and guarana (due to high amounts of caffeine).

**Phaseolamin:** This is a derivative of the white kidney bean (used as a "carbo blocker") that works by slowing down the digestion of starch by inhibiting alpha-amylase, an enzyme that breaks down starch to be more fully absorbed by the body. Since carbo blockers interfere with enzymes once the food moves into the stomach and intestines, partially digested fragments may result. These fragments can create two problems. First, unhealthy bacteria devour these particles causing fermentation, which leads to gas, bloating, and other gastrointestinal complications. Second, these fragments can pass through the intestinal wall and cause allergic reactions. Because they are not properly broken down, the immune system sees these particles as foreign and responds. This response can manifest itself in any number of symptoms, including fatigue, headaches, liver problems, anxiety, or skin conditions.<sup>14</sup> We feel there are much more healthful ways to achieve the end result of weight loss without these supplements. See the customer file titled *Weight Loss – Distinguishing Hope from Hype*.

**Potassium iodide/High dose iodine:** High dose iodine supplementation is often used to help with an overactive thyroid and may help protect the thyroid gland from the effects of exposure to radioactive iodine. High amounts of iodine may produce adverse reactions such as rashes, itching or lesions on the skin, gastrointestinal symptoms, or hypothyroidism, especially in people with a prior history of thyroid problems.<sup>15,16</sup> Because of such potential problems, the use of high dose iodide therapy should be supervised by a doctor.<sup>17</sup>

**Pregnenolone:** This hormone is a precursor to DHEA and other hormones. As mentioned above, there are numerous risks involved when supplementing with DHEA. Minimal research exists on pregnenolone's use in humans. Therefore, we do not feel it is safe to be self-prescribed. The chance of causing hormonal imbalance is high and could result in negative consequences.<sup>18</sup>

**Talc (magnesium silicate):** This anti-caking agent is used in some dry powdery foods, personal powder products (bath, baby, face, etc), creams, and supplements. Prolonged inhalation of talc (magnesium silicate) can cause lung problems because it is similar in chemical composition to asbestos, a known lung irritant and cancer-causing agent. There is no known acute toxicity, but there is a question about it being a cancer-causing agent upon ingestion. It is suspected that the high incidence of stomach cancer among the Japanese is due to the fact that the Japanese prefer that their rice be treated with talc. Talc is not considered food grade by the FDA.<sup>23,19</sup>

**Testosterone cream:** Although some men may benefit from testosterone, the use of any steroid hormone should be supervised by a trained physician. Even bio-identical hormones can be dangerous in excess. Testosterone does not cause prostate cancer, but it does increase the growth rate of a cancer that is already there. So it is important to not take more than directed by a physician after adequate assessments.<sup>20</sup>

## FOOD ITEMS

**Acesulfame K** (aka Sweet One or Sunette), a potassium salt, is a noncaloric artificial sweetener approved by the FDA in 1988. It is 200 times sweeter than sugar. Although this substance is on the FDA's Generally Considered As Safe list, which is a list of additives believed to be harmless, its safety is still in question. The chemical structure of acesulfame K closely resembles that of saccharin, a weak carcinogen. Findings of several studies showed a group of rats fed acesulfame-K developed more tumors than those not fed it. Acesulfame-K was also found to raise the blood cholesterol levels of diabetic rats.<sup>21</sup>

**Artificial colors:** Artificial in terms of food means "a substance not duplicated in nature." There are currently seven artificial (synthetic) coal-tar based dyes on the market. There is evidence that four of the

seven being used cause cancer in laboratory animals. The FDA has banned 17 food dyes since 1918 because of their potentially toxic effects. Furthermore, six of the seven being used in the US have been banned in other countries.<sup>27</sup>

**Artificial flavors:** There are over 2,000 flavorings, 500 are natural (which can be safe) and the rest are synthetic. The synthetic flavors are made from many different chemicals. Some can be toxic to the nervous system, the kidneys, or liver, but because they are usually consumed in small amounts they are relatively safe. There are also “flavor enhancers,” which are substances that seem to bring out or improve the flavors of a food. One example is MSG. As with any synthetic compound, sensitive people can have allergic reactions. Some sports products at Vitamin Cottage may contain artificial flavors.<sup>27,22,23</sup>

**Aspartame (Nutrasweet™):** Aspartame is nearly 200 times as sweet as white sugar and is only useful in cold and uncooked foods. This chemical breaks down and loses its sweetness when heated. Its shelf life is about 1 year, after which time it decomposes into methanol - a toxic wood alcohol. The methanol then breaks down into formic acid and formaldehyde in the body. Formaldehyde is a deadly neurotoxin and a known carcinogen, which causes retinal damage, interferes with DNA replication, and may cause birth defects. It also can cause damage to the immune system. Now that aspartame has been on the market for many years its side effects are becoming apparent. The FDA and CDC (Center for Disease Control) have received more complaints from the use of this substance than any other food additive. Adverse reactions include high blood pressure, headaches, insomnia, ovarian cancer, brain tumor, PKU (Phenylketonuria), seizures, brain damage in fetuses, extreme swelling, throat swelling, allergic effects, and retina deterioration. Keep in mind, these dangerous side effects are worsened when Nutrasweet is heated or used in cooking.<sup>24,25</sup>

**Bleached flours:** Milling whole wheat into white flour removes approximately 83% of the nutrients. Often times white flour suffers further processing with chemicals used to whiten and preserve the product. Chlorine dioxide (similar to Clorox) is used to bleach flour, which is an irritant to both the skin and the respiratory tract. Benzoyl peroxide is another chemical used to bleach flour. The bleaching process leaves residues of toxic chlorinated hydrocarbons and dioxins, both harmful for you and the environment. Methionine, an essential amino acid found in flour, reacts with bleaching chemicals to form a toxic compounds called *methionine sulfoxine*, which has been found to cause nervousness and seizures in animals. In addition, the bleaching process further destroys nutrients that have not already been depleted by the high heat of milling.<sup>26,27</sup>

**Fresh dairy products with rBGH (recombinant BGH):** Bovine growth hormone (BGH) is a protein produced by cattle. The gene has been cloned into bacterial cells to create a genetically engineered version called rBGH. It has been available and used by US farmers since 1994 and is used to increase milk production. Cows injected with recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH) have shorter life expectancies and increased incidence of disease. Cows injected with rBGH have been found to secrete higher levels of *IGF-1* (Insulin-like Growth Factor), a hormone that is tied to increased growth of cancer cells. It is reported that an excess level of IGF-1 poses serious risk of breast and prostate cancer in humans. Furthermore, rBGH is associated with high incidence of udder infections, internal bleeding, stress-related weight loss and severe reproductive disorders in cows. Please be aware that at this time we are unable to ensure that all our powdered milk and whey products are produced from rBGH free cows unless the product is listed as being organically produced. Also, bovine growth hormone can only be used on cows and not on goats, therefore all goat milk based products are inherently produced without the use of rBGH.<sup>28</sup>

**Hydrogenated and/or Partially hydrogenated oils:** Hydrogenation is a process that takes an unsaturated fat, such as soybean or other vegetable oil, and makes it more solid at room temperature, thus more saturated. A large percentage of the once healthy fats are converted to the trans-configuration, also known as *trans-fatty acids*. This process changes the molecular shape of these fatty acids, which negatively alters their biological functions. Excess trans-fatty acids can promote increased cholesterol

and triglyceride counts, make blood platelets stickier which encourages blood clotting, worsen an essential fatty acid deficiency, interfere with the body's detoxification system, interfere with insulin receptors, increase inflammation, and negatively impact the immune system.<sup>29,30,31</sup>



**Irradiated food:** This is a process of exposing foods to radioactivity to prolong the shelf life and reduce the risk of bacterial contamination. This process is currently approved for meats, grains, some produce, herbs, and spices. The radioactive rays can cause “off” flavors and textures, reduce vitamins, minerals and enzymes, and create chemical changes. All irradiated foods must be labeled as such, however, products containing irradiated ingredients do not require labeling. Prepared or packaged foods for restaurants, hospitals, or cafeterias are also exempt from labeling. Although you will NOT find irradiated food at Vitamin Cottage, keep a look out when shopping at other establishments. The symbol to the right is what is placed on irradiated foods.<sup>32</sup>

**MSG (Monosodium glutamate):** MSG is an artificial ingredient that is made up of glutamic acid and sodium. Glutamate is an excitotoxin, which stimulates your brain into thinking what you are eating tastes better than it does. This stimulation makes MSG a flavor enhancer. *The National Organization Mobilized to Stop Glutamate* estimates that one-quarter of the world's population reacts adversely to MSG. Some possible reactions include headaches, migraines, stomach upset, nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, irritable bowel, asthma attacks, shortness of breath, anxiety or panic attacks, heart palpitations, partial paralysis, "heart attack-like symptoms," balance difficulties, mental confusion, mood swings, skin rashes, runny nose, bags under the eyes, flushing, and mouth lesions. There are some ingredients that may contain MSG by the fact that it can be created during the manufacturing process. Some example ingredients include hydrolyzed vegetable protein, autolyzed yeast, kombu extract, broth, bouillon, stock, flavoring, natural flavoring, natural flavors, and natural chicken flavoring. Therefore, those who are particularly sensitive to MSG may want to avoid these ingredients as well.<sup>33</sup>

**Non-organic produce:** Conventional farming is in a perpetual cycle of using numerous pesticides to treat the soil and plants. There are many concerns with the use of these chemicals. First, many chemicals used today are known toxins to the body. In addition, banned pesticides such as DDT still linger in our soils. Secondly, large-scale pesticide spraying has created enormous pollution problems. A small percentage of the applied pesticide actually hits its intended target: the pests. Excess goes into groundwater, rivers, and the air. Lastly is the concern of nutrient value. Not only do pesticides reside in the flesh of the foods they are sprayed on, they also soak into the soil and deplete its nutrients. Therefore, if the soil is nutrient depleted, the food that is grown in that soil has less nutrient value. Organic farming is a method of growing foods with natural materials such as composted animal manure, fishmeal, seaweed, or alfalfa meal. Organic growers manage pests through prevention – proper soil management, cleanliness, timely planting, companion planting, and beneficial insects. Some organic growers may use some natural pesticides such as Bt and insecticidal soap if needed. Additionally, by law *certified organic* foods cannot be genetically engineered, irradiated, or be grown with synthetic materials.<sup>34,35</sup>

**Olestra:** This synthetic fat is a combination of soybean oil and sucrose. These ingredients are manipulated into molecules too large for the colon to absorb or digest. Therefore, Olestra passes untouched through the digestive system. This product has the potential to replace fat in such foods as chips and crackers. Preliminary studies suggest that Olestra causes tumors in laboratory animals. Olestra interferes with fat-soluble vitamin absorption, which includes vitamin A, E, D, K, Co-Enzyme Q-10, carotenoids, lutein, lycopene, and beta-carotene. Clinical studies have shown that 8 grams per day (equivalent to 16 Olestra containing potato chips) caused dramatic depletion of fat-soluble vitamins within 2 weeks. This fake fat may also cause intestinal cramping, flatulence and loose stool.<sup>27</sup>

**Sucralose:** Also known as Splenda™, sucralose is a no-calorie sugar substitute derived from sucrose (sugar) through a process that selectively substitutes three atoms of chlorine for three hydrogen-oxygen groups on the sucrose molecule. This makes sucralose a chlorocarbon, a substance that has long been

known for causing organ, genetic, and reproductive damage. The Merck Manual and OSHA Hazardous Waste Handbook states that chlorine is a carcinogen. Sucralose has also been shown to cause swelling of the liver and kidneys.<sup>36</sup> The structure of the sugar molecules is changed so that it is up to 600 times sweeter than sugar. There are limited human studies and no long-term studies of this product. Vitamin Cottage only carries one product with this sweetener, the Ultra Lo Carb 2 bar by *Country Life* (Bio Chem).

## OTHER ITEMS

**Antibacterial soaps:** Such soaps contain antibacterial agents (such as triclosan) that work like an antibiotic. Researchers are concerned that through the process of natural selection, bacteria that survive exposure to antibacterial agents pass along their resistant genes, making the next generation even tougher to combat. This process is exactly what has happened with medical antibiotics due to unnecessary prescriptions.<sup>37,38</sup>

**DEET** (diethyl-meta-toluamide): This insecticide can be found in most over-the-counter insect repellents. However, there are some concerns about the toxicity of DEET. For instance, a Duke University Medical Center pharmacologist named Mohamed Abou-Donia, Ph.D. has conducted a number of animal studies that found the chemical causes diffuse brain cell death and behavioral changes in rats after frequent and prolonged use. While the chemical's risks to humans are still being intensely debated, Abou-Donia says his 30 years of research on pesticides' brain effects clearly indicate the need for caution among the general public. Children in particular are at risk for subtle brain changes caused by chemicals in the environment, because their skin more readily absorbs them, and chemicals more potently affect their developing nervous systems. With heavy exposure to DEET and other insecticides, humans may experience memory loss, headache, weakness, fatigue, muscle and joint pain, tremors and shortness of breath.<sup>39</sup> There are many other insect repellent products that are DEET-free on our shelves that we are comfortable offering to the community.

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