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### Study Finds Herbal Supplements Often Tainted

Direct link to the News/Story:-

<http://www.newsinferno.com/archives/20676>

We have long been writing about [tainted herbal supplements](#) making their way into the marketplace and consumers homes. Now, The New York Times reports that of all of the herbal dietary supplements recently tested as part of a Congressional investigation, most contained some amounts of contaminants, including the dangerous toxic metal, lead. Also revealed, said the [New York Times](#), was that some supplement sellers make illegal claims about serious diseases their supplements allegedly cure, such as cancer.

While heavy metals—mercury, cadmium, arsenic—did not exceed safe levels, 16 of the 40 supplements tested revealed higher-than-acceptable pesticide residues; no less than nine products made what The New York Times said were “illegal health claims.” The report, prepared by the Government Accountability Office (GAO), was provided to The New York Times and will be made public at a Senate hearing today. Although Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, the principal deputy commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), said in an interview cited by The New York Times that he was not concerned about the supplements the GAO tested, but did discuss how the FDA just announced a recall of Vita Breath. As we previously wrote, Vita Breath is a dietary supplement manufactured that may contain hazardous levels of lead.

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene notified the FDA about a patient with lead poisoning who reported taking Vita Breath and two other herbal products. The department analyzed a sample of Vita Breath and reported that it contained 1,100 parts per million of lead, which is more than 10,000 times higher than FDA’s maximum recommended level for lead in candy.

We have long been reporting on recalled dietary supplement products, generally recalled because the products have been found to contain undeclared or dangerous ingredients. In other cases, the recalls have to do with any of a variety of herbal ingredients linked to dangerous adverse reactions. In some cases, the products are sold on the Internet; however, often, the recalled supplements are generally available in neighborhood shops.

According to a prior Wall Street Journal report, about two-thirds of all Americans take dietary supplements which includes, “vitamins, minerals, and herbal products,” according to the Council for Responsible Nutrition, an industry trade group, said the Journal. The group noted that the most commonly used supplements include multivitamins, calcium, and energy and muscle boosters and weight-loss products. Supplements are not as heavily regulated as medications, which require FDA approval to make it to market, said the Journal. Also, supplements made from products available on the U.S. market prior to 1994 can be sold without agency review, which includes a wide variety currently available, said the Journal. Even sellers of those products containing substances unavailable prior to 1994, need only advise the FDA and do not require approval to be sold, said the Journal.

In one 2007 survey cited by the Journal, undisclosed steroids were found in 25 percent of 52 samples studied. Also, a study tracking drug-induced liver injuries, found nine percent of 300 such cases were potentially linked to dietary supplements containing steroids. In under a year, the FDA issued warnings on over 70 weight-loss supplements containing potentially dangerous ingredients, including undeclared prescription drugs, said the Journal.