



## Alternative Medicines and Alpha-1

You may hear claims about the potential health benefits of alternative medicines, like herbal and vitamin supplements, or homeopathic medicines. Many people think “natural” remedies sold in “health food stores” are risk-free. But that’s not always the case.

Unlike prescription drugs, “complementary” or “alternative” medicines aren’t reviewed and tested by the FDA (Food and Drug Administration). This makes it difficult to weigh their benefits and risks. And it can make it harder to use them safely.

Vitamins and supplements don’t come in standardized doses. A 200 mg capsule from one brand may not be the same as a 200 mg capsule from another company. And actually, the strength of a dose can vary between different batches of supplements made by the **same** company.

You also have to be careful about possible drug interactions when taking supplements with prescription medicines.

### **What about vitamin supplements?**

Not all doctors agree that taking a daily multivitamin is good for everyone. A well-balanced diet provides all of the benefits given by multivitamins. Although they are safe, there is no evidence that a multivitamin improves health.

But most agree that taking high-dose vitamin supplements can be dangerous, particularly vitamins A and D.

Because of the role oxidants play in [Alpha-1 lung disease](#), some Alphas with lung disease take vitamins with anti-oxidant properties. These include vitamin C, vitamin E, and vitamin A. Since high doses of vitamin A can be toxic to the liver, talk to your doctor before taking any supplements.

More reliable information is beginning to emerge about complementary and alternative therapies. You and your doctor can

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use this information to weigh the risks and benefits of vitamins and other supplements.

*For more in-depth information on this topic, please visit the [Big Fat Reference Guide \(BFRG\)](#). If you are enrolled in AlphaNet's Subscriber Portal, you can access the BFRG [here](#).*

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