

NON-TRADITIONAL MEDS? BEWARE!

**FOLLOWING FROM “ZERO - The Project to End Prostate Cancer  
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### **Treatment can be Negatively Impacted by Cancer Patients Who Try Non-traditional Meds**

When one is diagnosed with cancer, they often crave control over the disease and want to take every measure to be healthy, which may lead to taking supplements or undergoing alternative treatments which may have a negative impact on their treatment of the disease. Studies estimate 60 percent of cancer patients try unconventional remedies and approximately 40 percent take vitamins or dietary supplements, which may not be FDA approved. Often harmless-sounding vitamins or "natural" supplements can negatively interfere with cancer medicines or cause cancer hormones to grow. One such supplement, DHEA, can pose a risk to prostate cancer patients as it affects testosterone levels. Studies show that as many as two-thirds of cancer patients who use unproven remedies do not tell their doctors. Many patients fear their doctors will disapprove and do not realize their care can be harmed as a result.

During a nutrition counseling session, Moffitt dietitian Diane Riccardi discovered Vince Palella, a prostate cancer patient, was taking dozens of pills a day including a saw palmetto extract, a supplement which might have interfered with his hormonal cancer treatments or the monitoring to determine treatment effectiveness.

"There's absolutely no way of knowing" if it did, Riccardi said. "The products he was taking were not highly purified - they were a mishmash," including some labeled "raw herbal extracts," she said. Companies often claim the contents of their products are trade secrets and do not disclose all ingredients or amounts.

"It's as difficult as finding out what the recipe is for Coca-Cola" to try to decipher what's in them and whether they pose a risk, she said.

Patients should discuss any supplements or alternative treatments they want to consider with their doctor to evaluate the impact their decision may have on their treatment.

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[by Marilyn Marchione | Associated Press | 06.08.2009](#)

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