

HERBALS and DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS

AEROMEDICAL CONCERNS: Recent surveys in the United States reveal that 69 percent of those surveyed use some form of complementary or alternative medicine. This undoubtedly affects Army aircrew. Some dietary supplements have clear benefits, some have uncertain benefits, and others are unsafe especially if taken in combination with medication or in certain work environments. The short term effects of some of these preparations are dangerous and use can result in sudden incapacitation in flight. The long term effects of many of these unregulated preparations are unclear and have not been studied to any degree in the aeromedical environment. Ascertaining the use of dietary supplements is an important aircrew safety issue. Aeromedical health care providers (FS/APA) need to research and provide information and education on dietary supplements to all aircrew. This aeromedical policy is to outline those products which may be viewed as nonharmful in limited doses and can be used in the aeromedical environment with the knowledge and monitoring of the FS/APA.

Any preparation not clearly permitted for use per this policy is not authorized for flight.

WAIVERS: The majority of herbal and dietary preparations are prohibited for aviation duty as many are used in cases of self-diagnosis and self-treatment. In many cases, studies do not reveal significant clinical efficacy. Any herbal and dietary supplements being used will be entered on the FDME. Herbal and dietary supplements are designated Class 1, 2, or 3.

Class 1: Individual aircrew may use the following supplements without prior approval of a flight surgeon. Any use, whether periodic or regular, must be reported on the annual FDME:

- Single multivitamin/mineral tablet per day
- Vitamins C, E, B6, B12 (oral)
- Calcium
- Folate
- Protein supplementation to include shakes, capsules, and nutritional bars, but they may only contain additives specifically approved as Class 1.

Class 2: Individual aircrew may use the following supplements with prior approval of a flight surgeon. Any use, whether periodic or regular, or as part of beverages or other supplement combinations must be reported on the annual FDME:

(NOTE: With use of these supplements by aircrew, the FS/APA needs to be concerned not only with the use and potential side effects of the supplement, but also with the underlying medical condition that the individual is treating.)

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- Vitamins A, K, D, Niacin, Riboflavin, Thiamine
- Magnesium, Zinc, Chromium, Selenium, Copper
- Glucosamine with or without Chondroitin
- Echinacea for short term (less than two weeks) use
- Saw Palmetto
- Creatine
- Ginseng- this preparation is prohibited 24 hours before flight

Class 3: All other preparations not specifically listed are disqualifying for flight duties. Waivers, while unlikely, can be applied for.

INFORMATION REQUIRED: All aircrew and those applying for any form of aviation or aeromedical training will report the use of any form of dietary supplement to their FS/APA. The presence or absence of side effects should be noted.

FOLLOW-UP: Use of any form of dietary supplement will be addressed at each visit with the FS/APA to include the annual FDME. Any side effects of use must be documented.

TREATMENT: The individual aircrew may be using these preparations for self-medication and should be carefully screened with regard to underlying medical problems.

FS/APA must educate themselves on the indications, use, and side effects of the preparations used by their aircrew. Use the references below to obtain information to assist in monitoring aircrew health.

REFERENCE: In this rapidly evolving area, check with your medical librarian for current references. Available internet references on this topic:

- <http://www.brooks.af.mil/web/af/altmed/HOMEFRAME.htm>
- <http://www.usuhs.mil/mim/ergopam.pdf>
- <http://nccam.nih.gov> - National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine also at 1-888-644-6226
- <http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov>
- Office of Dietary Supplements, National Institutes of Health also at 1-301-435-2920
- <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/supplmnt.html> - Food and Drug Administration