

# Many hospital patients not asked about supplements: study

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This raises risk of harmful drug interactions.

(HealthDay)—Most hospitalized Americans aren't asked if they take dietary supplements, such as multivitamins, a new study suggests.

"If clinicians are unaware of possible drug-[\[dietary supplement\]](#) reactions, they may unknowingly provide a treatment plan or prescribe medications that could have an adverse reaction or interactions with the dietary supplement," said study author Dr. Paula Gardiner.

She is assistant director of Boston Medical Center's program for integrative medicine and [health care disparities](#).

"Dietary [supplements](#) also affect physiological processes in the body and could have an impact on medical procedures like surgery, chemotherapy, blood work and many other treatments or procedures," she added in a medical center news release.

Nearly 18 percent of American adults (more than 40 million) take dietary supplements, according to the 2012 National Health Interview Survey.

The most commonly used dietary supplements are vitamins and minerals, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports. But other supplements may include herbs, amino acids or other substances, the study authors pointed out.

The study, published recently in the journal *Patient Education and Counseling*, looked at 558 hospital patients, more than half of whom (60 percent) used dietary supplements.

Of those 333 patients, only 36 percent had use of supplements documented at admission to the hospital. Only 18 percent told a [health care](#) provider about their dietary supplement use, and only one in five were asked about dietary supplement use by a [health care provider](#), the study found.

The ideal scenario is to be asked at admission about dietary supplement use, to disclose use of the products, and have their use documented in medical records. But all three criteria were met for only 6 percent of the supplement users, the researchers found.

Documentation of dietary supplement use on medical charts was lower among older patients and non-white patients, the researchers said.

"Research has shown that some of the reasons patients do not disclose [\[dietary supplement\]](#) use is because they either don't know that physicians need the information, or sometimes there's a fear of being judged by a clinician," Gardiner said.

"Medical school faculty have the opportunity, and in fact the obligation, to educate tomorrow's physicians about the importance of [\[dietary supplement\]](#) dialogue with [patients](#) of all ages and cultural backgrounds," she said.

Doctors need to establish a formalized approach to documentation to help prevent adverse reactions from dietary supplement-prescription medication interactions, Gardiner concluded.

**More information:** The U.S. National Library of Medicine has more about [dietary supplements](#).

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