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Colloidal Silver

What's the Bottom Line?

How much do we know about colloidal silver?

There are no high quality studies on the health effects of taking colloidal silver, but we do have good evidence of its dangers.

What do we know about the effectiveness of colloidal silver?

Claims made about the health benefits of taking colloidal silver aren't backed up by studies.

What do we know about the safety of colloidal silver?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has said that colloidal silver isn't safe or effective for treating any disease or condition.

What Is Colloidal Silver?

- Colloidal silver consists of tiny silver particles in a liquid.
- It's sometimes promoted on the Internet as a dietary supplement, but evidence supporting health-related claims is lacking.
- It can be dangerous to your health.

What the Science Says About the Safety and Side Effects of Colloidal Silver

- **Colloidal silver can cause serious side effects. The most common is argyria, a bluish-gray discoloration of the skin, which is usually permanent.**
- Colloidal silver can also cause poor absorption of some drugs, such as certain antibiotics and thyroxine (used to treat thyroid deficiency) and possible kidney, liver, or nervous system problems.
- In 2009, the FDA warned about the risk of argyria from taking colloidal silver.
- The FDA also warned in 1999 that colloidal silver isn't safe or effective for treating any disease or condition.

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- The FDA and the Federal Trade Commission have taken action against a number of companies for making misleading claims about colloidal silver products.

More About Argyria

- Silver can build up in the body's tissue, causing a bluish-gray discoloration of large areas of skin, especially those exposed to the sun.
- People have developed argyria from using homemade and commercial colloidal silver products.

What the Science Says About the Effectiveness of Colloidal Silver

Scientific evidence doesn't support the use of colloidal silver dietary supplements for any disease or condition.

- Silver has no known function or benefits in the body when taken by mouth.
- Silver is not a nutritionally essential mineral or a useful dietary supplement.
- People may be exposed to silver, usually in tiny amounts, through air, water, and food, and in certain activities such as jewelry-making or soldering.
- Colloidal silver products are sometimes sold as homeopathic remedies. For more information on homeopathy, see nccih.nih.gov/health/homeopathy.
- Topical silver (used on the skin) has some appropriate medical uses, such as in bandages and dressings to treat burns, skin wounds, or skin infections. It's also in medicines to prevent conjunctivitis (an eye condition) in newborns. However, there are no legally marketed prescription or over-the-counter drugs containing colloidal silver that are taken by mouth.

More to Consider

- Colloidal silver and other complementary products or practices that have not been proven safe and effective should never be used to replace conventional medical care or as a reason to postpone seeing a health care provider about a medical problem.
- Tell all your health care providers about any complementary or integrative health approaches you use. Give them a full picture of what you do to manage your health. This will help ensure coordinated and safe care.

For More Information

NCCIH Clearinghouse

The NCCIH Clearinghouse provides information on NCCIH and complementary and integrative health approaches, including publications and searches of Federal databases of scientific and medical literature. The Clearinghouse does not provide medical advice, treatment recommendations, or referrals to practitioners.

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-644-6226

TTY (for deaf and hard-of-hearing callers): 1-866-464-3615

Web site: nccih.nih.gov

E-mail: info@nccih.nih.gov

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PubMed®

A service of the National Library of Medicine, PubMed contains publication information and (in most cases) brief summaries of articles from scientific and medical journals.

Web site: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The FDA oversees the safety of many products, such as foods, medicines, dietary supplements, medical devices, and cosmetics. Its series of consumer updates includes the publication [FDA 101: Dietary Supplements](#) and [Tips for Dietary Supplement Users](#).

Web site: www.fda.gov

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-888-463-6332

Safety Reporting Portal

The Safety Reporting Portal allows consumers, manufacturers, health care professionals, researchers, and public health officials to file reports on serious problems suspected with dietary supplements to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health.

Report adverse events at www.safetyreporting.hhs.gov.

Federal Trade Commission (FTC)

The FTC is the Federal agency charged with protecting the public against unfair and deceptive business practices. A key area of its work is the regulation of advertising (except for prescription drugs and medical devices).

Web site: www.ftc.gov

Toll-free in the U.S.: 1-877-382-4357

Key References

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