

# What Are Natural Health Products?

Natural health products have become increasingly popular as Canadians look for better ways to manage their health. Over 75 per cent of Canadians purchased natural health products in 2005, according to an Ipsos Reid study commissioned by the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA).

There are currently over 40,000 natural health products (NHPs) available in Canada. Health Canada defines NHPs as:

- vitamins and minerals
- herbal remedies
- homeopathic medicines
- traditional medicines such as traditional Chinese medicines (TCM)
- probiotics
- amino acids and essential fatty acids
- other supplements such as chondroitin and glucosamine

NHPs are used to promote good health. They are sold in many different forms, including:

- tablets or capsules
- salves and creams
- liquid extracts and tinctures
- teas



## Natural Health Products Regulations

The *Natural Health Products Regulations* came into effect in Canada in January 2004. They will be fully implemented in 2010. The Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD) of Health Canada is responsible for monitoring compliance with these regulations.

Regulations control product licensing, how products are manufactured and the information that is on the label. Products approved under these regulations will be labelled with a NPN (Natural Product Number) or DIN-HM (Drug Identification Number-Homeopathic Medicine).

Manufacturers are also required to include the following information on the product label:

- what it should be used for
- recommended dosage
- length of time you should take it
- ingredients
- any known risk factors associated with the product



## What Are Organic Products?

Organic food production is based on a system of farming that avoids the use of conventional pesticides and fertilizers. Organic foods, such as fruit and vegetables, are processed without artificial ingredients, preservatives, or irradiation. Use of genetic engineering is prohibited in organic crop production.

As one of the fastest growing sectors in Canadian agriculture, the federal government predicts that the organic industry will account for 10 per cent of the Canadian retail market by 2010. Nearly all of Canada's organic products are exported, mostly in the form of bulk grain and oilseed products.

## Organic Products Regulations

In the past, Canada's organic food standards were voluntary and regulated by the organic industry. In December 2006, the industry became federally regulated with rules enforced by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA).

Under the new *Organic Food Regulations*, all organic food must be produced in accordance with a strict set of Canadian standards and certified to be in compliance. For example, certified organic products must contain at least 95 per cent organic ingredients.

In July 2007, the Canadian government unveiled the new Canada Organic logo. It is designed to tell consumers when they are purchasing products that are federally certified as organic.

The Canada Organic logo will begin appearing on food products by December 2008. By that time, all food labelled organic must be in compliance with Canada's federal regulations. Learn more at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca).



# Frequently Asked Questions About Natural Health Products

### Are NHPs safe because they're natural?

By definition, natural health products are generally accepted to be safe, low risk products. Labels on natural health products provide the facts consumers need to make an informed choice.

### How will I know if a product is licensed by Health Canada?

If the product bears a NPN (Natural Product Number) or DIN-HM (Drug Identification Number-Homeopathic Medicine) or a DIN (Drug Identification Number), it has been assessed for its quality, safety and efficacy by Health Canada. Consumers should see these designations on products by January 2010.



### What are some of the most popular types of NHPs?

Herbs and supplements are the most popular form of complementary health care products in North America.

### Where can I learn more about NHPs?

In addition to the Canadian Health Food Association ([www.chfa.ca](http://www.chfa.ca)) and its members, Health Canada's website offers detailed information about industry regulations and consumer attitudes about NHPs. Go to [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca).

