

Dietary Supplement Advertising

Dietary supplements include vitamins, plant extracts, amino acids, and combinations of such ingredients. Advertisements for these products may make claims about weight loss, alleviating pain, and even curing diseases. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not test these products in the same way that it tests pharmaceutical medicines. Some of these products can have adverse effects on the digestive system, kidneys, and other organs. Use the following activity to analyze claims made in advertisements for dietary supplements.

Name of Product	
Expressed Claims	Implied Claims

ACTIVITY

Visit your school or public library and select several different fitness, exercise, or health magazines. Choose two different advertisements for dietary supplements, and use a chart like the one above to help you analyze the claims made in each ad. List the “expressed” and “implied” claims about the product’s effectiveness and safety. An expressed claim is a statement such as “This product will help you lose weight.” An implied claim is conveyed in a more subtle way, such as the display of before-and-

after photos that imply the amount of weight loss achieved by a customer.

EXPRESS YOUR VIEWS

Write a paragraph for each ad, summarizing your overall impressions of it. Is it misleading? Does it make claims about scientific studies on the product? Does the ad appear to be a magazine article rather than an advertisement? Does the ad give warnings about possible adverse side effects associated with the product?