



Food supplements

During the period 2003-2006, the advertising budget for food supplements was over one billion baht per year, contributing to over-use of supplements.

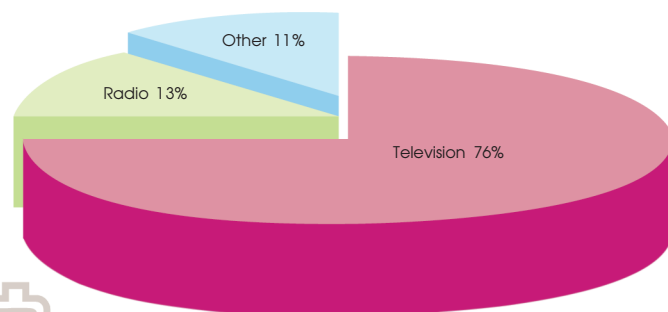
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Use of food supplements is growing. In one sense, this is a good thing, as it shows that people are concerned about their health. But special promotions, extensive advertising, direct sales, and excessive claims have lead to heavy and inappropriate use that does not constitute true health promotion.

Food supplements are foods that are taken in addition to normal food. In October 2006, about 5,000 food supplements were registered in Thailand. About one-third of these were registered for importation. Thais spend about 20 billion baht per year on supplementary foods and beverages incorporating traditional medicines. The main reason people buy food supplements is that advertising persuades them that supplements are essential. Advertisers claim that supplements can prevent or treat conditions such as high blood pressure or can help them lose weight. Sometimes people take supplements when they are playing sport, studying for an exam, or working hard because they worry that they are not receiving sufficient nutrients. Such beliefs are incorrect.

The advertising budget for food supplements exceeded one billion baht per year for the period 2003-2006. These amounts do not include special promotions and direct sales. Advertising is particularly heavy when a new product is launched. The two brands of birds' nest beverages together spend 200 million baht per year on advertising. The 2-3 brands of chicken beverage spend 150 million baht per year. Most advertisements make misleading claims, which spreads misunderstanding and sometimes harms consumers. The Food and Drugs Office has issued warnings, but there have not yet been information campaigns to reach the general public.

Distribution of advertising budget for food supplements

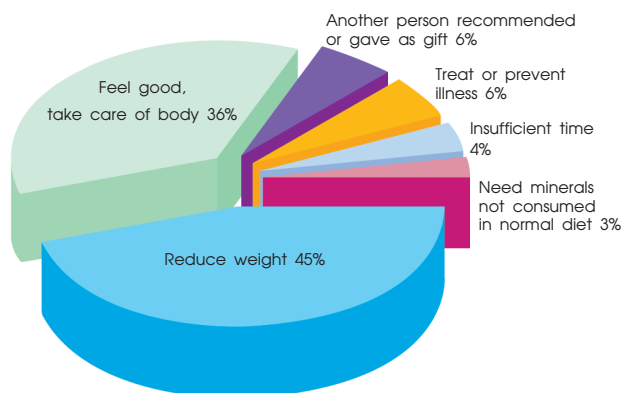


Source : Media Spending Ltd., 2005

Notes:

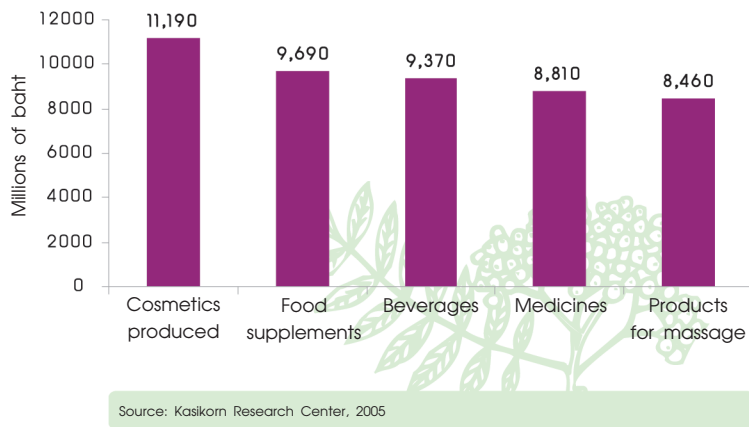
1. Advertising through television, radio, newspapers, magazines, hoardings, movies, and Internet
2. Data refer to the following products: vitamins, weight loss products, chicken beverage, birds' nest beverage, fruit soup beverage, fish products, and others.

Reasons for consuming food supplements

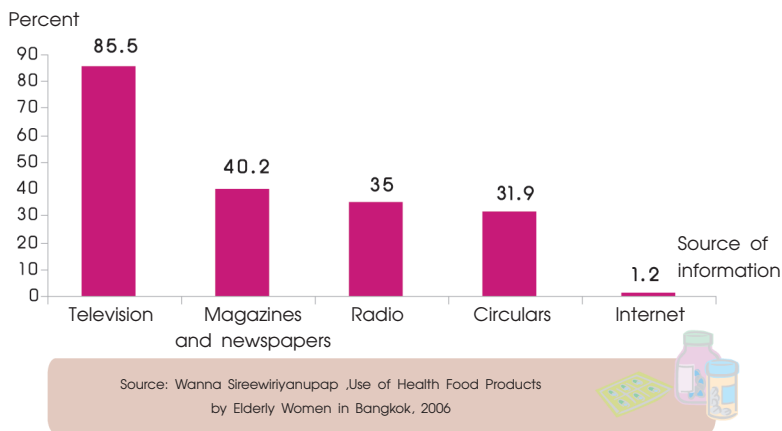


Source: Consumer Protection, 2003

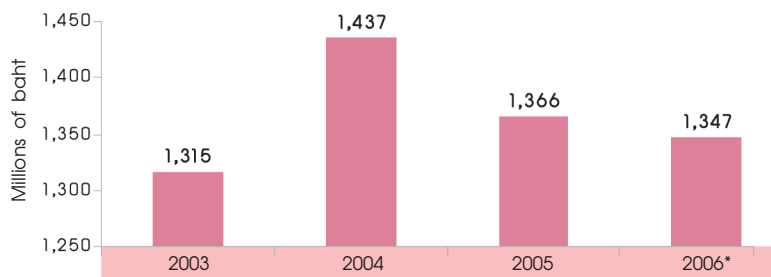
Expenditure on products produced from traditional medicines, 2005



Sources of information about food supplements among Bangkok women aged 60 and over

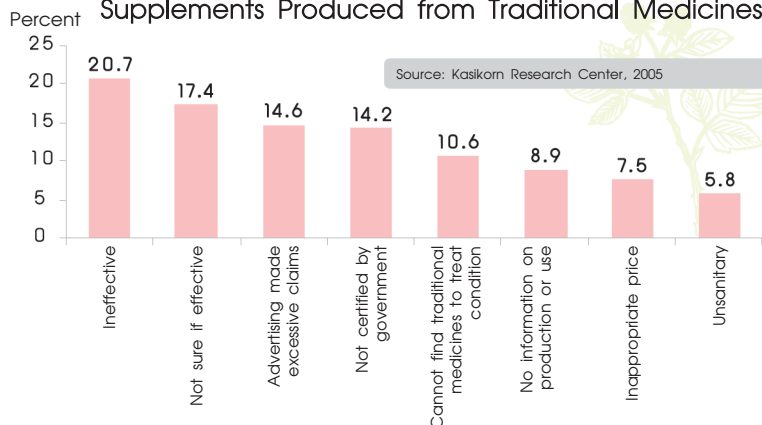


Advertising budget for food supplements, 2003-2006



Source : Media Spending Ltd.
 Notes : 1. Advertising through television, radio, newspapers, magazines, hoardings, movies, and Internet
 2. Data refer to the following products: vitamins, weight loss products, chicken beverage, birds nest beverage, fruit soup beverage, fish products, and others.
 3. *Estimated from data for January-August 2006

Problems Encountered by Consumers When Using Food Supplements Produced from Traditional Medicines



Example of Food and Drug Administration warnings for food supplements

Product	Warning
All supplements should contain the warning 'children and pregnant women should not consume'. Others should contain additional warnings as follows.	
1. Shark fins	- Not suitable for people with heart disease or recovering from surgery
2. Pollen	- Should not be consumed by people allergic to pollen
3. Khaitosan	- Women who are breastfeeding breastfeeding should not consume - People taking other supplements with large amounts of fat should consume two hours before or after this product - People who are allergic to seafood, and who are underweight, should use with caution
4. Fish oil	- Not for use by people who are allergic to seafood or fish oil - Should be used cautiously by haemophiliacs or by people taking aspirin
5. Evening Primrose oil	- Should not be used by people with a history of epilepsy - Should not be used by people taking drugs for epilepsy
6. Food fiber	- To prevent intestinal blockage, should consume with 1-2 glasses of water
7. Royal jelly	- People who are asthmatic or have allergies should not consume, because may cause severe allergic reaction
8. Products of ginkgo leaf	- Can interfere with clotting of blood
9. Ginger or ginger products	- Should not be consumed by people with history of kidney stones
10. Artificial sweeteners	- Is not a weight loss-product