

# WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER BUY SUPPLEMENTS ON AMAZON OR EBAY! A MUST-READ BY FORMER FDA SPECIAL AGENT GARY COLLINS

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In today's difficult economy, everyday folks seeking a health-and-energy boost may be hesitant to purchase "expensive" vitamins and supplements from "upscale" stores and distribution outlets. Instead, honest folks turn to Internet sites such as Amazon and eBay to purchase vitamins on the cheap for themselves and their kids.



*I urge you, don't do this! (emphasis added)*

As a former special agent and forensic investigator for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), my heart breaks for hardworking moms and dads trying to do right by their family by buying inexpensive supplements.

Little do they know that these "bargain" vitamins and capsules are worthless at best, and at worst may cost them and their children their health, and possibly their lives.

The fact is, it costs money to make quality dietary supplements such as vitamins, protein powders, fish oil capsules, energy bars, herbal blends, or sports nutrition products.

But if you have no morals and know how truly under-regulated the supplement industry is in America, you can make huge amounts of money selling dangerous counterfeit and expired supplement products.

How? You undercut the price of legitimate supplement companies. Cheaper wins. And the consumer loses.

Why should you believe me? For many years, not too long ago, I worked in the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as a Special Agent.

I've been behind the curtain of the supplement industry – way behind – so what I say is not based on some far-fetched conspiracy theory. I was there and witnessed it firsthand.

Now, as a public health advocate and creator of the *Primal Power Method*, here's what I want you to know about the vitamins, capsules and pills that can make or break your health.

There are three main ways that supplements end up on the market at unbelievably cheap prices:

1. They are counterfeit and probably dangerous.
2. They are useless expired products that have been repackaged as new.
3. They are stolen products released on the black market without any quality control.

Here's how each scenario plays out.

### **Counterfeit Products**

One of the easiest ways to make a dishonest buck in the supplement world is to create a pill that mirrors a name-brand health supplement. Create lookalike packaging and you can sell your worthless pill on the Internet for a “discounted” price. And a counterfeit operation is born!

People would be appalled if they knew how prevalent counterfeit dietary supplements truly are. Sadly, fake vitamins and “health” capsules have made their way into the general consumer market.

These dangerous pills masquerade as the real thing on the shelves of the name-brand department stores that virtually every family in America patronizes – and they certainly are available on the Internet.

Here's the bottom line: If an above-board supplement or pharmaceutical drug is popular, you can bet someone, primarily in China or India, is counterfeiting it. I'm not saying this as some off-the-wall scare tactic. I was there and this was my job.

Even worse? Fake pills virtually never have the correct amount of the active ingredient they are supposed to contain.

During my FDA tenure we ran lab tests on all kinds of lookalike pills and capsules. Some cheap/counterfeit supplements had ten times or more the amount of “medicinal” ingredients as

was indicated on the label. Worse, some had none, and others simply contained large amounts of sawdust!

Criminals are not moral, but they are often smart. They not only counterfeit health supplements, but also all of the paperwork that goes along with them. They have numerous distribution shell companies set up all over the world, so it is almost impossible to figure out the paperwork trail and the actual origins of these dangerous pills. (Trust me, I've been paid to untangle this kind of web many times.)

The real-world result is that there are virtually no legal consequences to selling fake pills, capsules or vitamins, and the criminals know it.

How prevalent are fake supplements? The IACC (International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition) estimates that brand-holders (the legitimate companies behind name-brand, non-counterfeit products) lose approximately \$600 billion of revenue annually because of counterfeiting.

Michael Danel, the secretary general of the World Customs Organization, has said that if terrorism did not exist, counterfeiting would be the most significant criminal act of the early twenty-first century.



That's why it is so important to buy directly from a legitimate manufacturer or from a trusted health practitioner whenever you can. Read the labels on the pills you buy. Call the customer service number and ask a few questions. Many companies will only give vague, uneducated answers about the contents of their products and the nature of a product's manufacturing processes.

Frankly, a lot of Internet pill-pushers won't even list a phone number or address online. Not good.

Bottom line: if it seems fake, it probably is. And if it's really cheap, it's almost certainly a counterfeit.

## **Expired Products**

Another way to make a dishonest living is to purchase a genuine product that has expired for pennies on the dollar. Change the dates on the package labels, and voila: a cheap “new” product ready to be brought back to market.

Legitimate supplement companies often have fire sales when they have products that are about to expire. The counterfeiters love this as it fits right into their business model. They can purchase these legitimate products and package them with counterfeit products and no one is the wiser.

I have seen this done in a couple ways: The criminals might simply replace the label with a new label and a fictitious expiration date. Or, if they received the expired product in raw form (not in the bottle) they will sometimes mix it with counterfeit tablets or capsules.

Bottom line: If criminals can make a couple bucks on something they will. It all boils down to money. And by purchasing expired, legitimate products they can have “genuine” product on hand if something goes wrong and someone complains.

Once again, it’s the consumer who will pay the price.

## **Stolen Products Resold by Criminal Enterprises**

This scheme is pretty straight-forward. Criminals simply break into the warehouses of an above-board supplement company or take the big rig truck transporting nutritional products by force. They then distribute the product to other criminal fencing enterprises and the supplements end up on the Internet at a super-cheap price.

Alternatively, employees of a genuine supplement company might steal product while at work and then sell it on the black market to criminals.

You may think, well in this case it’s a genuine supplement, so why should I care? Here’s why: Criminals don’t just work with stolen products, but with expired and counterfeit products as well. They all get mixed together.

So you as the consumer will never know which variation of the product you are getting. You may get lucky one time, another time you may not be so lucky. Is it really worth your health to save a couple of dollars?

For now, here are a few of my most important tips:

**- Buy supplements that are considered *pharmaceutical grade or professional grade if possible*.** They contain higher quality ingredients, and usually undergo stringent testing before being brought to market.

- **Only buy supplements from a reputable company.** Do your research and check them out. If the website is based in a foreign country and has no contact information or customer service number, there is a good chance this is a company involved in nefarious activities. Believe me, these companies exist, and we are talking about your health, and possibly your life.

- **Find out what standards are used to test the quality of the ingredients and the final products** of the supplement companies you want to patronize. Reputable companies will have an informative label on their supplements and will have more information about their testing measures on their website.

- **If it is cheap, avoid it.** No reputable company using high-quality ingredients can manufacture high-end supplements cheaply. It just isn't possible. Don't waste your money. Another insider fact: health practitioners who sell supplements (such as a chiropractor, doctor, or dietician... or my company!) are only allowed to sell practitioner-grade supplements at the manufacturer's suggested retail price (MSRP) or at a maximum of fifteen percent off of the MSRP, depending on the company. Basically, we all sign legal agreements that we will not discount the products on our website. This is pretty common practice to protect legitimate supplement companies. With this insider information, you can protect your family as well.

### **What My FDA Experience Taught Me**

The sad truth is that fake-pill-pushing criminals often operate in countries at a distance far further than the arm of Uncle Sam's laws can reach. It's easy to sell counterfeit supplements at reputable online venues such as Amazon and eBay. But for the consumer, it's a disaster.

Here's what a decade of forensic investigation really taught me: Your instincts are usually right. If you can't easily trace the origins of some "miracle" pills or are given the run-around by a supplement sales rep when you ask complex questions about ingredients or packaging, your gut will tell you what's up. Go with your gut.

Times are tough in America. But I urge you not to save dollars by buying deeply discounted supplements on Amazon, or other discount third party websites, without doing some serious research. Risking the health of your family and children is not worth it. Instead, buy high quality supplements, eat nutritious food, and get some exercise. That's the only real way to beat the criminals and achieve life-long health.



#### **About the Author**

Gary Collins, MS, is a former Special Agent for the U.S. State Department, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Food and Drug Administration. He is also an author, college professor, health consultant and practitioner. Mr. Collins is considered one of the premier health experts in the country due to his unique and unmatched background in the industry.