



Stress on Islamic Ingredients in Multivitamins

ARAB NEWS

JEDDAH, 8 August 2007 — Islam emphasizes physical and spiritual purity as well as cleanliness. Also, so far as consumption of any food or drink is concerned, Islam has laid down three important guidelines that one should not take food, which is prohibited by Allah; that all sources of obtaining food must be halal (lawful); and that consuming anything that is harmful to our health or body is not allowed.

"All dietary supplements are food alternatives and not life-savers so if they are haram (unlawful) we cannot take them under any circumstance. Also, our body is a trust from Allah so it is obligatory on the part of every individual to keep his or her body healthy and abstain from haram," said Dr. Amer Zaheer, an internal medicine practitioner based in Houston, Texas, and president of the US-based Herbal Pharma Inc.

Zaheer also runs the Halal Nutritional Center, a registered body whose trade mark is HNC. "Various Hadiths clearly tell us that in order to get our supplications accepted we need to have halal food, diet or nutrients, which do not contain ingredients that are haram. HNC helps Muslims to keep their bodies pure and healthy with 100 percent halal products under the slogan 'Halal Lifestyle, a Healthy Lifestyle,'" Dr. Zaheer told Arab News.

"This whole idea came to my mind when a couple of years ago, my patient and friend, who was executive director and CEO of a health center in the United States, told me that due to a heavy workload and stress, he asked his pharmacist to buy a multivitamin for him. The pharmacist came back and told him that no multivitamin was available without gelatin caps and alcohol, though very few companies claimed that their products were gelatin-free but not alcohol-free. My friend discussed this with another friend who had a doctorate in pharmacy and worked in Walgreen, one of the leading US pharmacies. The pharmacist told him that not only capsules were made of gelatin (whose source is pork), but also a number of ingredients were sourced from pork or pig's skin, bone or intestines. On top of this, he added, that the process of manufacturing was not halal too. This information surprised my friend and he started inquiring about vitamins, especially the processing of herbal or vegetarian labels products," Dr. Zaheer said.

"My friend told me that he made a supplication to Allah that if he had a chance to work in a pharmaceutical company he would produce halal dietary supplements for all Muslims. After a while he discussed this project with me. Upon seeing his determination and curiosity, I decided to finance this project. We met many experts in the area, attended many pharmaceutical conferences, met many CEOs of pharmaceutical companies and also attended halal conferences and discussed with various Ulema," he said.

Research shows that inadequate intakes of vitamins and minerals cause a number of diseases or deficiencies in the body. Nevertheless, users of regular vitamins and minerals are at lower risk of catching various diseases. A recent Harvard study shows a regular intake of vitamin D and calcium is most likely to reduce the risk of breast cancer. Similarly, a number of studies show that Omega 3 (fish oil) is useful in reducing heart attacks, lowering blood pressure and lowering cholesterol. Many studies show that multivitamin users are less likely to have certain types of cancers, osteoporosis, delayed onset of cataract, age-related degeneration, incidences of stroke and also fewer birth defects.

"Thus we see that food supplements and vitamins are essential for a healthy life," Dr. Zaheer said. HNC products are different from other dietary supplements. The sources of every ingredient, its process of extraction and even the sources of flavors are thoroughly checked.

"The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) sent a group of five expert nutritionists and pharmacist to our manufacturing site for inspection. They found that all ingredients are free from alcohol and gelatin," said Dr. Zaheer, adding that he is presently offering four products — HNC multivitamins containing 13 vitamins, 11 herbs, 5 vital minerals and 12 other elements; HNC calcium containing 100 percent herbal sources of vitamins, minerals with vitamin D, which is very good for strong bones, and also relieves stress during menopause; HNC B-12, which is good for relieving stress, provides immediate energy and stops memory loss; and Omega 3 fish oil, which is scientifically proven to be very good for reducing strokes, heart attacks, and lowering cholesterol (LDL), triglyceride, enhance HDL, also balancing blood pressure.
