



## Doctor in the Kitchen®

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### VITAMINS: NATURAL OR SYNTHETIC

Is there a difference between so-called "natural" or "organic" vitamins and synthetic vitamins? The question is a legitimate one and it is important, particularly with regard to the current "back-to-nature" trends which abound in our society.

As an item in the Journal of the American Medical Association said: "The labeling of vitamins as

'natural' implies that they have been extracted from a substance found in nature." Examples given include vitamins A and D extracted from codfish liver, vitamin E from wheat germ oil, Vitamin B12 from liver, vitamins B1 and B2 from yeast, and vitamin C from rose hips.

But because of the cost of such extracting, most vitamins sold today (with the exception of vitamin E) probably are synthetic

vitamins.

So what is the difference? According to Margarita Nagy, M.S., of the AMA's Dept. of Foods and Nutrition, and author of the Journal article:

"Synthetic vitamins are those that have been manufactured by a pharmaceutical company. Biochemically, a vitamin has only one molecular structure; thus, whether a vitamin is extracted from a natural product or synthesized by the manufacturer, its structure is identical in either case, and possesses, consequently, the same biochemical activity."

But there's more to the story. One would suppose as a Berkeley, California pharmacist did, that vitamins sold as "natural" had, in fact, come from natural sources. But when he

visited two manufacturers of "natural" vitamins he observed that many of the products so-labeled contained "synthetic vitamins added to the natural base." "Rose Hips Vitamin C Tablets" had been adjusted from the original 2 percent to 50 percent by adding chemical ascorbic acid. The pharmacist, Adolph Kamil, said he was told that if no vitamin C were added the tablet "would have to be as big as a golf ball."

Similarly, he found that B vitamins labeled "natural" or "organic" turned out to be "mostly synthetic chemicals added to yeast and other natural bases."

What's my point? It's not to run down vitamins in any



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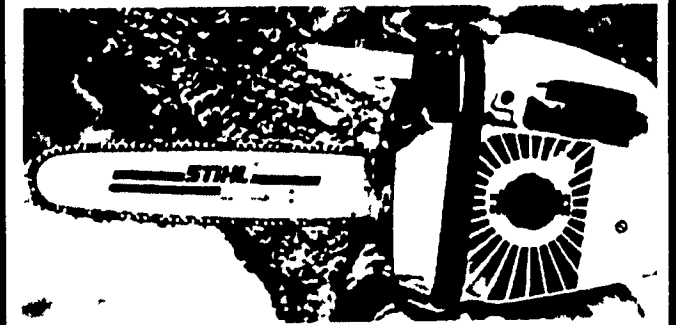
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form, natural or synthetic. But we should know what we are buying. Listen to what Pharmacist Kamil (who is in charge of consumer information and quality control for the pharmacies of the Consumers Cooperative

of Berkeley, Calif.) says: "As for me, I'm going to put my money on good food, fresh and wholesome, from a wide variety of sources, and thereby get all my nutritional needs the most natural way."

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