

# MEDICAL QUACKERY

You've seen miracle claims for products related to health. It's no wonder people spend billions of dollars a year on fraudulently marketed health-related products and treatments that not only are unproven and often useless, but sometimes also are dangerous.

Health fraud trades on false hope. It promises quick cures and easy solutions for a variety of problems, from obesity and arthritis to cancer and AIDS. But the "cures" don't deliver. Instead, people who buy them are cheated out of their money, their time, and even their health. Fraudulently marketed health products can have dangerous interactions with medicines people are already taking, and can keep them from getting a proper diagnosis and treatment from their own health care professional. Many unapproved treatments are expensive, too, and rarely are covered by health insurance.

**Miracle Cures.** Miracle cure scams cover a whole range of products and services which can appear to be legitimate alternative medicine. They cover health treatments for all kinds of medical conditions. Miracle cure scams usually promise quick and easy remedies for serious medical conditions.

They are usually promoted by people with no medical qualifications who come up with a range of claims about why their products are not supported by conventional doctors. For example, they might talk about medical industry conspiracies to silence them or secret ancient techniques that challenge modern practices.

Miracle cure scams are particularly nasty because they usually increase health and emotional stress.

**Weight Loss.** These scams promise weight loss for little or no effort. The scam may involve an unusual or restrictive diet, 'revolutionary' exercise or fat-busting devices, or products such as pills, patches, or creams. Scammers exploit the fact that people can often be attracted by promises of success with little effort. Many weight loss scams suggest that you can achieve great results without having to do any extra exercise or even modify your diet.

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Often, attractive people or celebrities are used to sell the products. At best fad diets and products might result in a temporary weight loss in the short term and can be dangerous if followed over a longer period. Unless a person develops and maintains a better diet and physical activity habit, any weight lost (often water or muscle rather than fat) will soon return.

**Fake Online Pharmacies.** Fake online pharmacies are scams that use the internet and spam emails to offer drugs and medicine at very cheap prices or without the need for a prescription from a doctor. These scams can cause both financial and health problems.

Most spam email offers selling medicines or drugs are designed to steal your credit card details or to download damaging files (like spyware and key-loggers) onto your computer. Even if you actually do receive the products that you order, there is no guarantee that they are the real thing. In some cases, the medicines or other products may even damage your health.

Remember that there are legitimate online pharmacies. These businesses will have their full contact details listed and will also require a valid prescription before they send out any medicine that requires one.

**Free Trial Offers.** A chance to try something out for free? What have you got to lose? Plenty! Do your homework before taking advantage of any “FREE Trial Offer” as you may ultimately be enrolling yourself in a **buying club**.

- Look for catches in the terms and condition section.
- Watch for pre-checked boxes.
- Mark your calendar so you know when you need to cancel the order.
- Look for details on how you can cancel future shipments or services.
- And always check your credit card to make sure you weren't charged for something you didn't agree to.

**Here are some tips regarding possible medical quackery:**

- If it looks too good to be true—it probably is.
- Be very careful about offers for medicines, supplements or other treatments: always seek the advice of your health care professional.
- Only give out your personal details and information where it is absolutely necessary and where you have initiated the contact and trust the other party.
- ALWAYS get independent advice if an offer involves significant money, time or commitment.
- Read all the terms and conditions of any offer very carefully: claims of free or very cheap offers often have hidden costs.