

CONSUMER ADVISORY

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By Attorney General Tom Miller

Prevent Health Fraud

Con-artists cash in on people's false hopes and wishful thinking.

One of the oldest frauds preys upon the natural human desire for good health. As long as there have been people afflicted with poor health or physical limitations, there have been others eager to profit by promoting false remedies and false hopes.

It is bad enough when victims of health fraud waste their time and money. But the stakes may be much higher. People who are desperate may abandon established treatments in favor of unproven and expensive "cures" that only make matters worse.

Tips to avoid health fraud:

- **Be suspicious of dramatic claims.** "Scientific breakthrough," "secret," "miraculous," "quick & easy," "ancient" -- such claims are often used for fraud. Real medical breakthroughs won't be announced for the first time in paid ads.
- **Seek the advice of health care professionals.** Consult with legitimate health care professionals before considering an unusual health product or treatment.
- **Beware of conspiracy theories.** Many con-artists claim to be victims of a conspiracy to suppress their "miracle" cures. Effective remedies are unlikely to be suppressed.
- **Don't put much weight on testimonials,** even from celebrities. Many worthless products have been promoted through glowing – but misleading -- testimonials.
- **Be leery of claims of "risk-free" money-back guarantees.** What may sound like confidence in the product might really be a scheme for getting payments that are never refunded.
- **Don't take chances with your health.** Don't abandon proven treatments in favor of untested approaches.

In short, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is not true. *Protect your health and your pocketbook! Be on guard against health fraud!*

For more information, or to file a complaint, write to the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division, 1305 E. Walnut, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Call 515-281-5926, or 888-777-4590 (toll-free for Iowa only). Web site: www.iowaAttorneyGeneral.org (click on "protecting consumers.")