

Medical Foods: A Comprehensive Guide to their Uses and Benefits

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DESCRIPTION

Medical foods have been around for quite some time, but not many people are aware of their existence. Medical foods are a specific category of products that are intended for use under the supervision of a physician to manage specific conditions. Unlike dietary supplements, medical foods are not taken for general health and wellness but are used to help manage medical conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, and inherited metabolic disorders. In this article, we will explore what medical foods are, how they differ from dietary supplements, and the benefits they offer.

What are medical foods?

Medical foods are a specific category of products that are intended for use under the supervision of a physician to manage specific conditions. According to the FDA, medical foods are defined as "a food which is formulated to be consumed or administered enterally under the supervision of a physician and which is intended for the specific dietary management of a disease or condition for which distinctive nutritional requirements, based on recognized scientific principles, are established by medical evaluation." In other words, medical foods are designed to provide specific nutrients or combinations of nutrients to support the dietary management of a particular condition.

Medical foods vs. dietary supplements

It is important to understand the difference between medical foods and dietary supplements. While both are intended to support health and wellness, they serve different purposes. Dietary supplements are taken to supplement the diet and are not intended to treat, cure, or prevent any disease. On the other hand, medical foods are specifically designed to help manage medical conditions and are used under the supervision of a physician.

Medical foods and their uses

Medical foods are used to manage a range of medical conditions.

Some of the most common medical conditions that can be managed with medical foods include:

Alzheimer's disease: Medical foods containing ingredients such as omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, and antioxidants have been shown to support brain health and improve cognitive function in individuals with Alzheimer's disease.

Diabetes: Medical foods containing slow-digesting carbohydrates, fiber, and protein can help stabilize blood sugar levels in individuals with diabetes.

Inherited metabolic disorders: Medical foods can provide the specific nutrients that individuals with inherited metabolic disorders cannot produce on their own, such as amino acids or complex carbohydrates.

Gastrointestinal disorders: Medical foods containing probiotics, prebiotics, and digestive enzymes can help support digestive health and manage symptoms associated with gastrointestinal disorders.

Cancer: Medical foods can help support the immune system and provide necessary nutrients during cancer treatment.

Targeted nutrition: Medical foods are designed to provide specific nutrients or combinations of nutrients to support the dietary management of a particular condition. This targeted nutrition can help improve health outcomes and manage symptoms associated with a particular condition.

Improved compliance: Medical foods are often used as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that may include medication, lifestyle changes, and other therapies. By providing a convenient and easy-to-use option for managing a medical condition, medical foods can help improve compliance with treatment recommendations.

Reduced side effects: Many medical conditions are managed with medication, which can often have side effects. Medical foods can provide an alternative or complementary approach to managing a condition, reducing the need for medication and associated side effects.

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Improved quality of life: Medical foods can help manage symptoms associated with medical conditions, improving quality of life and overall health outcomes.

CONCLUSION

It is important to note that not all products marketed as medical foods meet the FDA's definition of a medical food. The FDA requires that medical foods be formulated to be consumed or administered enterally (through the digestive system) under the supervision of a physician and intended for the specific dietary

management of a disease or condition for which distinctive nutritional requirements are established. Some products marketed as medical foods may not meet these requirements and may be marketed as such for marketing purposes.

In addition, medical foods are not regulated in the same way that drugs are regulated. While they must meet certain requirements to be marketed as medical foods, they do not have to undergo the same rigorous testing and approval process as drugs. This means that the safety and effectiveness of medical foods may not be as well-established as that of drugs.