

# The World's Most Powerful DOCTOR-RECOMMENDED Patented Now Available Without a Prescription AS-SEEN-ON-TV SUPPLEMENT

## Recommended by Pharmacists

If you can't trust a pharmacist, who *can* you trust?

**Example:** Nature Made Calcium Citrate and Advanced Calcium with Vitamin D and Magnesium are

Recommended by Pharmacists."

Yet according to the most recent industry survey, less than 2% of pharmacists who recommend calcium supplements recommend Nature Made.

In contrast, 37% recommend Os-Cal and 25% recommend Citracal.

(Nature Made is first on the list, however, when it comes to vitamins A, C, D, and E.)

**Example:** GNC's PharmAssure herbal supplements are "pharmacist recommended."

By pharmacists at Rite-Aid, GNC's business partner since 1999, that is. *That* must have been a tough endorsement to get.



## Without a Prescription

Want to make your pills sound powerful? Piece of cake.

**Example:** Nutrition 21's Chromax 1000 Chromium Picolinate is "doctor strength."

The 1,000 micrograms of chromium in Chromax 1000 may be more than 25 times what's considered an adequate daily intake, but there's little reason for doctors to prescribe chromium supplements—at *any* dose.

Most studies show that it doesn't control weight or blood sugar in people with or without type 2 diabetes.

**Example:** Efacor fish oil and Certiphene rapid weight-loss formula are "now available without prescription." *Now?* Neither supplement ever needed one.

BY DAVID SCHARDT

**W**ant to start your own supplement company? Inventory is the easy part. Whether it's sex pills, weight-loss pills, or energy pills, the Internet is crawling with companies that will sell you just about any formulation in bulk at wholesale prices.

What to charge? Multiply what you paid by 5...or 10. License? S-u-r-p-r-i-s-e! You don't need one.

The tough part is figuring out how to make your pills look better than the scores of others being hawked by like-minded entrepreneurs.

The possibilities are endless. Here are some success stories. And don't worry about getting caught. No one's watching.



## Doctor Recommended

Add instant credibility. Hire an MD to recommend your pills. Or at least come up with a photo of a trustworthy-looking person in a white lab coat, stethoscope over his or her shoulder.

**Example:** Advanced Formula Shen Min Hair Loss Solution is "Doctor Approved, Doctor Recommended." Boomer Care Anti-Aging Formula is a "doctor's formulated blend."

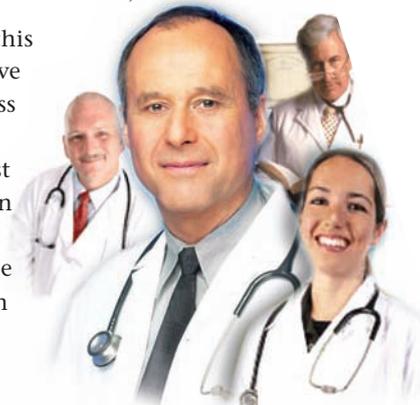
The companies may know who those doctors are, but their Web sites sure don't let on. Neither firm responded to our e-mails asking for the doctors' names.

**Example:** The president and "formulator" of Doctor's Best supplements isn't a doctor. And an advisory board of six people—none a medical doctor—decides which supple-

ments are sold by Doctor's Trust Vitamins ("every product we offer you is one that doctors trust").

**Example:** For \$2,488 this summer, you could have bought the Web address Doctor-Approved.com. And who wouldn't trust a supplement sold by an outfit with *that* name?

(You don't need to be an MD, the salesperson assured us.)



## Patented

This one will cost you a little time and money, but it could pay off big.

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office awards patents to inventions that are “new” and have “a useful purpose.” But the federal courts have ruled that inventors don’t have to prove that their creations work, because “the associated costs would prevent many companies from obtaining patent protection on promising new inventions.”

In other words, a dietary supplement is eligible for a patent “well before it is ready to be administered to humans,” says a Patent and Trademark spokesperson.

Bingo! Get a patent for your pills and watch the bucks roll in as consumers mistakenly assume that the stuff actually works.

only patented form of Bitter Orange, Advantra-Z...to stimulate your metabolism.”

The idea of using bitter orange, also known as *Citrus Aurantium*, to stimulate weight loss was patented in 2001. The patent application described three unpublished, short, poorly controlled trials on a total of just 11 people. No published studies show that taking bitter orange leads to weight loss.

Don’t feel like a patent? How about a trademark? That’s a symbol or phrase that companies use to help brand their products. Here, too, you may be able to get by with no evidence.

**Example:** In 2004, the manufacturer of **Garlique** garlic pills trademarked the slogan “Cholesterol’s Natural Enemy.” According to the official record of the trademark proceedings, the company didn’t have to prove its claim.

The trademark examiner “may” consider scientific evidence when determining whether to approve a trademark application, says the Trademark Office.

“However, the examiner’s resources, both in terms of time and technical research materials, are limited.”

Too limited to ask the company for its evidence, or to even figure

out that **Garlique** has never been tested for lowering cholesterol?

Too limited to go online and learn that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services concluded, following an exhaustive review of the scientific evidence, that it is “unclear” whether garlic can lower cholesterol levels?



## Clinical Studies

Even if studies show that your pills don’t work all that well, you can still boast.

**Example:** “22 clinical studies can’t be wrong,” says Natrol in the ad for its **Promensil** red clover pills for women. The supplement is “clinically proven to safely relieve hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disturbances, and mood swings while promoting breast health, heart health and emotional well-being.”

Here’s Natrol’s “can’t be wrong” math:

- (1) *In six studies*, Promensil showed some benefits, like decreasing arterial stiffness and cutting the number of hot flashes.
- (2) *In five studies*, Promensil had mixed results that sometimes contradicted the six studies that found benefits. In one, for example, Promensil didn’t relieve hot flashes or other menopausal symptoms, but slowed bone loss in the spine (though not the hip).
- (3) *In six studies*, Promensil flopped. It didn’t ease menopausal symptoms, build memory, lower cholesterol, or do just about anything else.
- (4) *In two studies*, researchers simply traced the absorption and metabolism of Promensil. They neither looked for nor found any benefits.

That makes 19 studies. How did Natrol get to 22? It counted one of the 19 three times and another one twice.

Bottom line: The jury is still out on whether red clover can help women going through menopause. But one thing is clear—Natrol’s math is no better than its research results.

**Example:** “B1 Better is the ONLY PATENTED product with the purpose of improving age-related memory loss,” says the Web site ([b1better.com/B1BetterFacts.pdf](http://b1better.com/B1BetterFacts.pdf)). “Beware of inferior products; other supplements that CLAIM to reduce age-related memory loss are not patented in the United States.”

In his patent application for **B1 Better**, which is a fat-soluble form of vitamin B-1, the inventor conceded that no studies had ever tested his supplement. And none have been conducted since then.

**Example:** The weight-loss supplement **MiracleBurn** contains “the

## As Seen on TV

Want people to pay more attention to your supplement? Have it “seen on TV,” even if the show criticizes it.

**Example:** “As seen on 60 Minutes” appears on just about every Web site selling a weight-loss supplement that contains hoodia. In 2004, the CBS program traveled to South Africa’s Kalahari Desert to tell the story of the cactus-like plant that travelers traditionally chewed on to blunt their hunger. But not a single good published study has tested whether hoodia curbs hunger or helps people lose weight.

The **Hoodoba** brand of hoodia supplement claims that it was the one featured on “60 Minutes.” But a transcript of the program shows that Hoodoba wasn’t mentioned at all. In fact, the only discussion of hoodia supplements was to point out that they do “nothing at all” because they contain too little of the plant to have any effect.

“60 Minutes” not knocking at your door? There are other ways to get “seen.”

**Example:** The Web site for “doctor recommended” **Lipocerin** weight-loss pills (which also contain hoodia) boasts that the product has been “seen on” [cnn.com](#), [foxnews.com](#), [usatoday.com](#), [rd.com](#) (Readers Digest), and AOL Health. But a search of those Web sites’ archives turned up only two mentions: a video on hoodia on [cnn.com](#) that doesn’t mention Lipocerin and a single (unanswered) question on an AOL Health message board asking if Lipocerin interacts with prescription drugs.



## World's Most Powerful

Is your supplement the “world’s most powerful”? If you say so.

**Example:** We found nine weight-loss supplements that claimed to be the world’s most powerful. Among them:

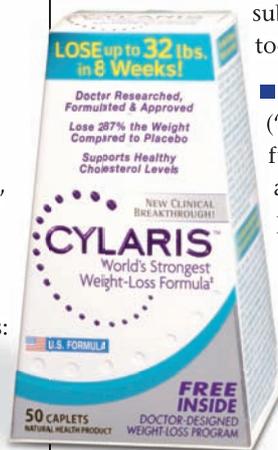
■ **Metabolene** (“the most powerful over-the-counter weight loss formulation”).

■ **MiracleBurn** (“its patented main ingredient, Advantra-Z, is proven to be the strongest natural weight loss substance available today”).

■ **Thermocerin** (“world’s most powerful fat burner, now available without a prescription”).

■ **Cylaris** (“the world’s strongest weight-loss formula”).

Small world.



## Disinfomercial

**Y**ou’ve probably seen those half-hour-long commercials, called infomercials, that run on late-night television. They sell things like rotisseries, household cleaners, and weight-loss pills.

And you’ve probably wondered whether the hyperactive hosts and guests are for real and whether the products they’re touting really work. So did NBC’s “Dateline” magazine show. In 2004, the program decided to find out how easy—or hard—it would be to make a fraudulent infomercial for a bogus dietary supplement. Too easy, it turned out. (The segment is at [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14856571/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/14856571/))

First, “Dateline” created a phony product—Moisturool—by filling capsules with Nestlé Nesquik cocoa powder. Then it made up a phony claim—that the pills smooth away wrinkles by moisturizing the skin from the inside out. Finally, it created a phony company to market Moisturool and contacted companies that make infomercials.

A West Coast firm agreed to produce a half-hour program extolling the benefits of Moisturool, even though the company was repeatedly told that no studies showed that it worked, and that consumers who used it were not likely to see dramatic results.

That didn’t matter to the company, as long as some consumers believed that Moisturool worked. All the infomercial needed was an



expert to recommend Moisturool.

“You’re gonna want somebody in a white coat saying it works and it’s safe,” the producer explained to the undercover reporter. Is that hard to find? asked “Dateline.” “It’s never a question of can you find somebody,” the producer replied. “It’s a question of how good are they. And how much do they want...Everybody has their price.”

What about getting into trouble with the Federal Trade Commission, which regulates advertising? “You won’t have to worry about the FTC if [Moisturool] doesn’t hurt people,” the producer said. “We know exactly what you can say, what you can’t say...and what you can say in a way that they’re not gonna come after you.”

Four months and \$140,000 later, the infomercial was ready. An attractive television actress hosted the show and lied about using Moisturool. Part-time actresses hired for \$50 each posed as satisfied customers. (“I would feel my cheeks and they were like velvety smooth and I’d go, ‘Wow, this is just totally amazing!’” said one.)

And, for a \$5,000 fee, the chief of dermatology at a Santa Monica hospital praised Moisturool eight times in the infomercial, despite knowing nothing about it. When “Dateline” later asked the dermatologist why she endorsed Moisturool, all she could offer was: “I don’t know. I guess it seemed like a good idea at the time.” The infomercial never aired.