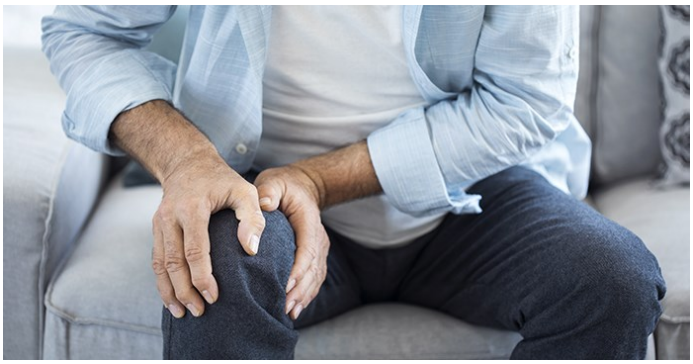
Certain food supplement for joint conditions are not recommended for at-risk populations

In France, food supplements containing glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulphate, claiming to contribute to joint comfort, are experiencing a boom. Adverse effects, likely to be linked to the consumption of these food supplements, have been identified by the nutrivigilance scheme of the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES). In this context, the Agency has conducted an assessment to identify the potential risks associated with taking these products. Following its expert appraisal, ANSES advises certain populations not to consume glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulphate-based food supplements. In addition, ANSES reiterates its general recommendations on the consumption of food supplements and the reporting of adverse effects.



Reported adverse effects

Adverse effects associated with the consumption of these food supplements have been reported to ANSES under its nutrivigilance scheme. A wide variety of effects have been reported: digestive disorders, abdominal pain, skin rashes, itching, liver damage and purpura (bleeding skin lesions).

ANSES carried out an expert appraisal to identify the potential risks associated with the consumption of food supplements containing glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulphate, based on these reports. The Agency's experts also studied reports of adverse effects collected in other countries (Europe, Canada and the United States) and carried out an in-depth analysis of the scientific literature.

Where should reports be made?
Adverse effects can be reported on the Adverse Health Event Reporting Portal of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health or directly by completing the online reporting form.

At-risk populations identified

The expert appraisal identified specific populations for whom the consumption of food supplements containing glucosamine or chondroitin sulphate presents a risk, and is therefore not recommended:

- People who are diabetic or pre-diabetic, asthmatic or on anti-vitamin K therapy;
- People with a food allergy to crustaceans or insects, for glucosamine food supplements;
- People who need to watch their intake of sodium, potassium or calcium, as the supplements can be an important source of these elements;
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women and children, due to insufficient data on the safety of these products for such populations.

In addition, ANSES recommends that manufacturers take measures to better inform consumers about the risks associated with the consumption of these food supplements for these specific populations.
Lastly, ANSES believes that the maximum daily doses of glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate authorised in food supplements should be harmonised at European level on the basis of safety data from robust safety studies – currently lacking – for these two compounds.

Consumers should :

- Seek the advice of a doctor when consuming food supplements;
- Avoid consuming the same ingredient from different sources (food supplements, medication, etc.), in order to avoid overdose;
- Avoid the concomitant consumption of several food supplements and favour the consumption of food supplements with simple compositions in order to limit the risk of interactions;
- Exercise great vigilance regarding the purchase of products sold through alternative channels (internet, gyms, etc.) and without personalised advice;
  Inform their doctor or pharmacist that they are taking food supplements.

While individual consumers can report adverse effects, it is preferable to contact a healthcare professional.

TO FIND OUT MORE, READ THE:

ANSES OPINION on the risks associated with the consumption of food supplements for joint conditions containing glucosamine and/or chondroitin sulphate

Healthcare professionals should:

- Ask their patients whether they are taking food supplements, especially when biological abnormalities or clinical manifestations of undetermined origin appear.
- Use the nutrivigilance scheme to report any adverse effects likely to be associated with the consumption of food supplements of which they become aware.

Food supplement manufacturers should: use the nutrivigilance scheme to report any adverse effects likely to be associated with the consumption of food supplements about which they become aware.

Gwenn VO VAN REGNAULT