

# Help Investigate Whether a Med is Derived From Animals

**Some patients will ask you if their meds contain ingredients from animal sources.**

People may need or want to avoid products derived from animals due to religious beliefs...an allergy...or personal preferences.

For instance, *Armour Thyroid* comes from desiccated pig thyroid...enoxaparin from pig intestines...*Premarin* from pregnant mares' urine...and some flu vaccines are grown in chicken eggs (*Afluria*, etc).

Document details about these allergies or preferences...so products with ingredients from animals can be avoided, if needed.

For example, calcium can come from oyster shells...chondroitin from bovine cartilage...and glucosamine from shellfish.

Review a product's ingredients in the package labeling...or contact the manufacturer to ask if it contains animal products.

Be aware that many capsule shells contain gelatin...which can come from pigs or cows. For instance, the gelatin used in brand and some generic *Colace* capsules is made from pigskin.

Help identify alternatives if a product can't be used for a patient due to animal ingredients.

For example, a capsule may be able to be changed to another dosage form (tablet, etc)...or some patients may be okay emptying the contents from a capsule for administration.

In other cases, patients may need a different product...such as levothyroxine (*Synthroid*, etc) instead of *Armour Thyroid*.

Or a patient may prefer *Flublok* or *Flucelvax*...the egg-free flu vaccines.

Don't be surprised if patients ask about specialty supplement manufacturers, such as *Future Kind* for vegans...*Freeda* or *Puritan's Pride* kosher products for Jewish people...or *NoorVitamins* halal supplements for Muslims. Be ready to order items, if requested.

Become a pro at updating profiles with allergies, preferences, and other key info with our resource, *Patient Profiles 101*.

## Key References:

- ISMP Med Safety Alert! Community/Ambul Care 2022;21(4):1-5
- Prescriber. 2016 Dec;27(12):47-51
- BMC Med Ethics. 2013 Dec 1;14:48
- Orthopedics. 2011 Apr;34(4):292-5

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