

MedlinePlus

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/>

MedlinePlus is a multiple award winning database that contains authoritative information from the National Library of Medicine, other health agencies, and health related organizations. It is very comprehensive in its scope. Pre-formatted *PubMed* searches are included which give easy access to many medical journal articles. There is extensive information about drugs, diseases, and disorders. The site includes an illustrated encyclopedia and *Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*. The user can also find over 165+ interactive tutorials, clinical trials, NIH Senior Health information and surgery videos in separate search areas on the homepage.

The database has 750+ Health Topics, 1,350+ organizations that provide information and 18,000+ links to authoritative health information. When doing a search, there are two main ways to search the information:

- (1) The Search MedlinePlus search box, or
- (2) Health Topics, which gives two ways to search.

Under Health Topics searches can be done by an A-Z area or by several different methods of finding diseases. At the lower right-hand corner of the Health Topics page, there are 5 other searches available to users. I found the section on Health Check Tools to be of interest and would be valuable to the user needing to have these health checks done. The results found from the two main ways to search are quite different. If at all possible, I would suggest using the Health Topics.

Most of the information is reviewed on a monthly to an annual basis in the Health Topics sections of the page. The results from the Search MedlinePlus search are not dated. The database itself is updated on a daily basis. At the bottom of each search the user can find the last date updated or reviewed. Other sections that can be searched with links on the home page are less frequently updated.

For example, NLM is preparing to load an updated version of the medical encyclopedia.

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DailyMed

<http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/about.cfm>

The subtitle of this database is *Current Medications Information* and that is what the user will find. This database gives the user high quality information about marketed drugs' label information.

The description may include clinical pharmacology, Indications & usage, contraindications, warnings, precautions, adverse reactions, over dosage, dosage administration, and patient counseling information, supplemental patient material, boxed warnings, and patient package insert information.

The label information can be e-mailed to the user. It is possible to download the entire label database. The Archives file contains information from old drug labels. If information on a label has changed, a comparison is possible using the current information.

There is an RSS feed that can be used to get update notices and information about new drug labels that the FDA has approved and then forwarded to *DailyMeds*. There is an explanation about how to get an RSS reader and get the feed from *DailyMeds*.

Label authors have a SPL Format Preview they can make use of so that the proper format is used to write and enter data into the database.

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Dietary Supplements Labels Database

<http://dietarysupplements.nlm.nih.gov/dietary/>

This database by the National Library Medicine gives details for over 2,000 brands of supplement that are available for purchase. The database is based on the Dietary Supplements On-line Database (DSOL) copyrighted in 2005-2007 by DeLima Associates. This database puts in one place information that can be found in many other sources.

The database can be used to answer many questions that the consumer might have about dietary supplements. The user can see what ingredients are in the products and compare brands. The database contains information about what brands contain certain ingredients and the fraction of daily recommended nutrients are provided. Comparisons can be made between different brands.

There are several ways to search the database, alphabetical, brand and labels, which makes it very helpful in making the comparison. Warning labels and recalls are also included. There is an excellent FAQ section that answers many questions the user might have about dietary supplements. The glossary of terms explains many of the terms used on labels and other sources where information can be found about dietary supplements. The section on related resources gives information about other NIH/FDA sites and links to recalls/enforcements and warnings.

The NIH nor the FDA tests the products nor do they investigate to see if the information is complete or accurate (for more information check the FAQ). NIH tries to be as up-to-date as possible about the products, but beware that this product shouldn't be a substitute for reading labels on products and contacting the manufacturers yourself. The entries do provide phone number and mailing addresses.

The user of this database assumes full responsibility for using it and should understand that no one monitors these supplements. The user uses it at his/her own risk.

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Drug Information Portal

http://druginfo.nlm.nih.gov/drugportal/drugportal.jsp?APPLICATION_NAME=drugportal

This site is as the title states a portal to find drug information from a variety of sources. It is a free web resource from the National Library of Medicine and provides an easy-to-use portal to current drug information for 15,000+ drugs. This is a very stable website and most of the information may be updated, but old information remains on the web page in the archive. There is much information that can be found for each drug in the database. The current information includes things like clinical trials, consumer health issues, AIDS-related drug information, pharmacological actions, and physical properties and structure.

The basic name-search/retrieval architecture is provided by NLM's Chemical Identification/Dictionary ChemIDplus©. There are over 194,000 unique searchable drug names and their synonyms that can be found. There is also a spellchecker that suggests names of possible drugs that the user might be looking for and that don't have the correct spelling for the drug needed. This seems to be a unique feature of this database.

The user can search by a drug's brand/trade name or the generic/common name. When the results are retrieved, all possible names are given along with information from NLM/NIH drug information resources and other drug information resources that provide information to the portal.

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