FDA

The Nation's Premier Consumer Protection And Health Agency

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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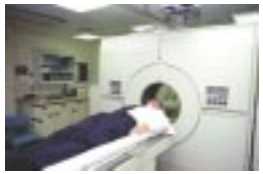
Who We Are and What We Do…

We are a team of 9,000 dedicated public health employees that includes physicians, nurses, consumer safety officers, lawyers, and scientists, with specialties ranging from biomaterials engineering to pharmacology. Decisions made by FDA affect every American every day. In 2000, consumers spent $1 trillion — more than 20 percent of their income — on hundreds of thousands of products whose safety and effectiveness is our responsibility. Yet, the per capita cost of all FDA services is less than 2 cents a day!

The public trusts FDA to ensure that:
1. Foods are safe, wholesome and truthfully labeled.
2. Drugs for both humans and animals, and vaccines for humans are safe and effective.
3. Blood used for transfusions is safe and in adequate supply.
4. Medical devices, from scalpels to CT scanners, are safe and effective.
5. Transplanted tissues are safe and effective.
6. Equipment that uses radiant energy, such as X-ray machines and microwave ovens, is safe.
7. Cosmetics are safe and properly labeled.



Our Priorities For The Future

FDA has identified the following four strategic priorities for FY2003 and beyond. Each priority reinforces the importance of *prevention* as the agency's primary response to the nation's health and safety concerns.

Assuring a Safe Food Supply: FDA is responsible for assuring the safety of 80 percent of the U.S. food supply and annually monitors more than 4 million food import entries into the United States. That includes half of all seafood and more than 20 percent of the fresh fruits and vegetables consumed by Americans. FDA is working with partners to significantly reduce foodborne illnesses and deaths. Prevention strategies based on strong scientific research and risk assessment are implemented through a nationwide inspection program in partnership with the states.

Assuring Medical Product Safety: FDA will continue to ensure that drugs, vaccines, and medical devices are safe by conducting more than 15,000 inspections each year to make certain that these products are properly manufactured and distributed, and by monitoring their safe performance and use.

Managing Emerging Hazards: FDA must be vigilant in assessing and then quickly and effectively reducing risks associated with unexpected health and safety threats to Americans such as bioterrorism, AIDS and Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), also called "mad cow disease." FDA's approach has been to counter these hazards through a regulatory framework and the agency's scientific expertise.

Bringing New Technologies to Market: FDA ensures that the products of new technologies are available to U.S. consumers. Because of the agency's timely, science-based decisions, millions of Americans can get the medicines, biologics, and medical devices they need and be assured of their safety and effectiveness.

Principles

To effectively carry out these priorities, FDA adheres to fundamental principles that frame its actions and lead to more effective public health results. These principles include:

- Use state-of-the-art science to make accurate and timely decisions about the safety of products and processes;
- Think and act in a global context as we regulate products that are marketed worldwide;
- Make decisions that consider the total product life cycle from premarket development stages to postmarket monitoring and surveillance of product safety;
- Work with partners in all sectors to strengthen the FDA's prevention efforts.

Did You Know . . .

- FDA approves new drugs in the United States as fast as, or faster than, anywhere else in the world.
- FDA helps select the flu strains to be included in each year's flu vaccine and participates in the development of flu and other vaccines.
- FDA scientists have developed an inexpensive seafood freshness indicator called "Fresh Tag" that changes color to indicate when the product has spoiled.

- FDA tests home-style meals prepared from ingredients purchased in grocery stores nationwide to check for pesticide residues and other food contaminants.