In Singapore, medicinal and other health-related products are regulated under various legislations such as the Medicines Act, the Poisons Act, the Sale of Drugs Act, the Medicines (Advertisement and Sale) Act and the Misuse of Drug Regulations. The control of health products is under the purview of Health Sciences Authority (HSA). Products that are presently subjected to licensing requirements under HSA include Western medicinal products, Chinese proprietary medicines and Cosmetic products.

On the other hand, food and supplements of food nature come under the purview of the Singapore Food Agency (SFA). The import and sale of these products in Singapore are governed by the Sale of Food Act and the Food Regulations. Importers of these products are required to ensure that the food products they intend to import comply with the requirements of the Food Regulations, including the labelling requirements.

The classification of products in the food-health product interface is a challenging one as it is dependent on various factors. HSA and SFA have developed a classification tree* to assist companies determine the likely classification of their product. However, this tree serves only as a guide and companies are advised to seek confirmation with the respective Authority on the product’s classification.

For detailed information on the regulation of health or food products in Singapore, you may visit the websites of the respective controlling agencies.
The following classification tree provides guidance in the classification of products whose presentation, ingredients or function fall into the food-health product interface.

Please note that the above serves only as a guide. It may be updated from time-to-time. You may contact the respective Agencies* for clarification if you are unsure of the classification of your product.

* Click for more details
* A Chinese medicinal material (CMM) is a medicinal material (herb, animal part or mineral) used in the practice of traditional Chinese Medicines

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**Classification introduction**

The classification tree provides guidance on the classification of food-health products. It distinguishes between:

1. **Part of a Daily Diet**: Products intended to be part of one's daily food intake, such as beverages, grains, powders, and snacks. These are generally available without defined dosages or restrictions.
2. **Supplementation to a Diet**: Products that are taken as supplements to one's diet, often in small unit doses. These may include capsules, tablets, softgels, etc.
3. **Taken for Medicinal Purpose**: Products intended for specific medicinal purposes, often requiring defined dosages and warnings on usage.

**Useful Links**

* Click for more details
Part of a Daily Diet

**Definition of “Part of a Daily Diet”**
The product or substances of food nature that provide the nutrients (such as carbohydrates, protein, dietary fibre, vitamins and minerals) which contributes to a normal healthy diet. The product or substance may be used as part of a meal or taken to replace a meal.

- **Examples of substances that can be taken as part of a diet:**
  1. Bee pollen
  2. Bird nest
  3. Chinese woodfrog / Hashima (*Rana Siccus*, 雪蛤 / 哈士蟆)
  4. Chlorella
  5. Chrysanthemum flower (*Flos Chrysanthemi*, 菊花)
  6. Fermented soybean (*Semen Sojae Preparatum*, 淡豆豉)
  8. Ginkgo seed (*Semen Ginkgo*, 白果)
  9. Grosvenor momordica fruit (*Fructus Momordicae*, 罗汉果)
  10. Honeysuckle immature flower (*Flos Lonicerae*, 金银花)
  11. Jew’s ear / Black fungus (*Auricularia*, 木耳)
  12. Jujube seed (*Semen Ziziphi Spinosae*, 酸枣仁)
  13. Lily bulb (*Bulbus Lili*, 百合)
  14. Noni (*Morinda citrifolia*)
  15. Perilla leaf, fruit (*Perilla frutescens*, 紫苏叶 / 子)
  16. Spirulina
  17. Star anise fruit (*Fructus Anisi Stellati*, 八角茴香)
  18. Tangerine peel (*Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae*, 陈皮)
  19. Wolfberry fruit (*Fructus Lycii*, 枸杞)

- **Examples of products that can be taken as part of a diet:**
  1. Energy food
  2. Essence of Chicken / duck / fish / deer
  3. Granules for making soup e.g. Ginseng Bah Kut Tea
  4. Herbal teas and drinks for general, regular consumption e.g. Ginseng tea (tea bags or granules), 夏桑菊 (Xia sang ju), 白花蛇舌草 (Bai hua she she cao)
  5. Herbal jelly e.g. 龟苓膏 (Gui ling gao)
  6. Meal replacement
  7. Mushroom essence
  8. Protein and carbohydrate-based supplements
  9. Royal jelly
  10. Sports supplements
  11. Wine or vinegar drink containing herbal ingredients commonly used in food

**Back to Classification Tree**
Supplementation to a Diet

Definition of “Supplementation to a Diet”

This product or substance is taken to provide additional nutrients which cannot be obtained or is not adequately obtained through normal dietary means.

This product or substance is taken for nutritional or functional benefits by providing nutrients in amounts above those normally obtained from the diet or by providing nutrients which are not normally present in conventional food substances. The nutrients are taken for health maintenance, particularly for specific nutrient deficiencies or in times of stress when normal dietary intake is insufficient to address the additional nutrient need.

- Examples of substances that can be taken as a supplement of a diet:
  1. Alpha lipoic acid
  2. Alpha-linoleic acid
  3. Amino acids e.g. Leucine, Lysine, Methionine, Glycine, Histidine, L-Arginine, Glutamine, Carnitine, Tyrosine, Taurine
  4. Bee propolis
  5. Bioflavanoids
  6. Black cohosh (Cimicifuga racemosa)
  7. Brindle berry (Garcinia cambogia)
  8. Bulk laxatives e.g. Psyllium (Plantago), Ispahugula
  9. Cat's claw (Uncaria tomentosa)
  10. Chitosan
  11. Chondroitin
  12. Echinacea (E. purpurea, E. augstifolia, E. pallida)
  13. Enzyme isolates e.g. Bromelain, papain
  14. Evening primrose oil
  15. Flaxseed (Linum usitatissimum) oil
  16. Garlic (Allium sativum) extracts e.g. oils, allicin, alliiin
  17. Ginger (Zingiber officinalis) extracts e.g. oils
  18. Ginseng products other than the tea form i.e. extracts (liquid or granules), capsule and tablet
  19. Glucosamine
  20. Green tea extracts e.g. polyphenols
  21. Guarana (Paullina cupana) extracts
  22. Herbal or floral teas with documented health functions e.g. Rooibos tea, Chamomile tea, SOD tea e.g. 二十四味凉茶
  23. Inositol hexaniacinate
  24. Inositol hexaphosphate
  25. Isoflavones
  26. Melatonin
  27. Methylsulphonylmethane
  28. Milk thistle (Silybum marianum)
  29. Omega-3 or Omega-6 oils e.g. Eicopentaenoic acid (EPA), Docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)
  30. Pycnogenol
  31. Phosphatidylcholine
  32. Phosphatidylserine
  33. Plant sterols including phytosterols, phytoestrogen and beta-sitosterol
  34. Prebiotics including fructo-oligosaccharides
  35. Probiotics (In non-milk based products) including Lactobacillus, Streptococcus thermophilus, Bifidobacteria
  36. Protein isolates including whey protein isolates, creatine
  37. Resveratrol
  38. Saw palmetto (Serenoa repens)
  39. Senna (Cassia senna, C. acutifolia)
  40. St. John's wort (Hypericum perforatum)
  41. Soyabean isolates
  42. Starflower (Borage officinalis) seed oil
  43. Tea tree extract
  44. White willow (Salix alba)
  45. Wild yam extracts
Definition of “Taken for a Medicinal Purpose”
This product or substance is taken for medicinal purpose e.g. treating, preventing or diagnosing disease; or carries medicinal claim.

Examples of substances that can be taken for a medicinal purpose:

1. Bael fruit *(Aeglo marmelos)*
2. Baikal skullcap root *(Scutellaria baicalensis, 黄芩)*
3. Black cumin *(Nigella sativa)*
4. Brahmi *(Bacopa monnieri)*
5. Crow dipping *(Pinellia ternata, 半夏)*
6. Doubleteeth pubescent angelica root *(Angelica pubescens, 独活)*
7. Dyer’s woad root *(Isatis tinctoria, 板蓝根)*
8. Gambir vine *(Uncaria rhynchophylla, 钩藤)*
9. Gypsum Fibrosum *(石膏)*
10. Magnolia vine *(Schisandra chinensis, 五味子)*
11. Olibanum *(Boswellia carterii, 乳香)*
12. Oum *(Ptychotis ajowan)*
13. Sandalwood *(Santalum album)*
14. Siler root *(Saposhnikovia divaricata, 防风)*
15. Huperzine A
16. Synthetic Caffeine
17. Charcoal
18. Vitamin K

Examples of products that can be taken for a medicinal purpose:

1. Chinese Proprietary Medicines
2. Traditional Indian Medicines (e.g. Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani)
3. Traditional Malay Medicines (e.g. Jamu)
4. Western Pharmaceutical Drugs (e.g. Huperzine A, Synthetic Caffeine)
Presentation
The presentation of a product refers to its external appearance. Generally, food products would be presented in conventional food presentation and health products in the pharmaceutical presentation.

Conventional Food Presentation
Refers to the presentation of products in the conventional food format, including drink beverages, grains, loose powders, snack bars, noodles, soups, jelly, cereals, spreads, dairies, granules, drops etc and any other presentations as may be allowed by the Singapore Food Agency.

Pharmaceutical Presentation
Refers to products that are presented in the pharmaceutical presentation, including tablets, capsules, caplets, softgels, gelcaps and any other pharmaceutical presentations as may be allowed by the Health Sciences Authority.
Useful Links

Websites related to regulation of health products in Singapore

- HSA Website *
  - Health Products Regulation *

Websites related to regulation of food products in Singapore

- SFA Website *

* Click for more details