



*Natural Solutions for Healthy Living*

## Adverse Drug Reaction Surge in 2004



### FDA Blames 14% Jump on Increased Prescription Use

Reports of "adverse events" related to pharmaceutical drugs reached an all-time high in 2004, according to a new report by the federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

The FDA received 422,500 adverse event reports from drug companies, health professionals and patients—an increase of 14% over the 2003 total of 370,887. FDA officials said the report is based on preliminary estimates, but is not expected to differ much from final figures to be issued later this year.

### Types of Drug Reactions

There are a wide range of pharmaceutical drug reactions, ranging in severity from nausea, skin rashes and fever to acute liver failure. These drug reactions have been determined to cause more than 100,000 deaths annually in the United States, as well as twice that many hospitalizations.

### Increased Prescription Use

The FDA has recently been on the defensive over a series of safety problems involving widely used drugs. However, Paul Seligman, director of FDA's Office of Pharmacoepidemiology and Statistical Sciences told USA Today that a surge in prescription drug use is behind the increase in drug reactions. "There are more drugs on the market and more use of pharmaceuticals in general," Seligman said. "Clearly, you're likely to have more side effects."

Pharmaceutical sales in the United States totaled \$235 billion nationally in 2004, an 8.3% annual increase and almost triple the 1995 figures, according to IMS Health, a pharmaceutical market research company.

### Statistics Understate the Problem

The adverse drug reactions reported by the FDA represent a small portion of those that actually occur. That's because drug manufacturers are not required to report adverse reactions unless they result in hospitalization or death. A variety of studies have shown that only about 1 to 10 percent of the total are reported, according to the FDA's Seligman.

## Pharmaceutical Drugs and the Wellness Revolution

Because pharmaceuticals can have such powerful effects on our bodies, it is important that we begin with the safest possible alternatives when addressing our health concerns. Today's wellness revolution, with its focus on preventive health care and the use of natural nutritional and botanical products, can be very helpful in minimizing the incidence of adverse drug reactions.

**Sources:** *USA Today* 3/14/05. [www.imshealth.com](http://www.imshealth.com).

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