

# Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## \*\*\*Consumer Advisory\*\*\*

### Terry Goddard Warns of Deceptive Online Sales of Supplements

(Phoenix, AZ- April 21, 2009) Attorney General Terry Goddard is warning consumers to be cautious when signing up for “risk-free” trial offers of nutrition supplements online.

The Attorney General's Office has received a recent increase in complaints from consumers who have signed up online to receive free or nearly-free trials of popular nutritional products, such as Acai berry supplements.

These consumers report being charged, without their knowledge, for additional monthly shipments of the product at full price or for other expensive products or services they never agreed to purchase. The sites avoid notifying the customer of additional charges by hiding information about the charges in fine print and in other messages that the customer is not required to read or acknowledge prior to purchase.

“The Internet opens up many opportunities to deceive consumers who invest their money and their trust in a company,” Goddard said. “Consumers deserve to be informed about the agreements they are making when purchasing a product, and I intend to pursue companies that compromise their transparency and customer service for the sake of profit.”

In December 2008, the Attorney General's Office filed a complaint against one such company, Central Coast Nutraceuticals, Inc. (CCN), located in Phoenix. After its customers registered for the trial supplement, CCN allegedly enrolled them in a free trial of an online fitness and diet consultation service as well as monthly shipments of the product they purchased on a trial basis. To avoid subsequent monthly charges of \$29.95 or more for these programs, consumers allegedly were required to contact CCN to cancel unwanted memberships, which they frequently learned about only after being billed.

According to the complaint, CCN also used billing information to charge customers for pre-selected “up-sell” products that the consumer would have to actively de-select to avoid purchasing in the online order form. When customers tried to contact CCN to have unauthorized charges reversed, their phone calls faced hold times of over an hour.

Consumers who purchase products online should look for fine print and other purchase agreements before agreeing to pay for a product. Consumers should also read through any information or agreements before providing an online company with billing or personal information. If the validity of an offer or advertisement is in doubt, check the credentials of the company running the Web site before making a purchase.

Copies of the complaint filed against CCN and a previous press release on the case are available at [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov).

Consumers who feel they have been the victim of consumer fraud should contact the Arizona Attorney General's Office Consumer Information and Complaint division in Tucson at (520) 628-6504, in Phoenix at (602) 542-5763 or toll-free outside of Maricopa or Pima County at (800) 352-8431.

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