

Beyond the Label

Shopping for Supplements



by Margy Squires

Quality. Every supplement company claims to have the best. Sometimes the product label is the only way you can separate the extraordinary from the ordinary. Besides the obvious, here's what else you need to know to help you pick the best to feel your best.

The Company You Keep. Sometimes it is not easy to know who you're dealing with when a catalog shows up in the mail or a web search lands you in a cyber store. With TyH, you know the 5 W's of who, what, where, when and why we started because it's more personal. And we like it when our customers call us by our first name. Know the company and you'll know how they do business.

Be Specific, Please. Ingredients must be listed specifically. A product that advertises "highly absorbable" for a magnesium oxide which has a poor absorption rate is selling the customer a false claim. Likewise, specific amounts are used in studies to get desired results and products that cite the study should be offering an ingredient/amount to match. Token amounts of a recognized nutrient or herb (lutein, ginkgo) have little therapeutic benefit. Recognizing specific, beneficial ingredients will give you more bang for your health buck.



Dropping Names. Like Albion minerals, many ingredients have research credentials. Look for registered ® patent and trademarks™ symbols. (Some trademarks are only for the product name, such as Fibro-Care™). A company advertises these ingredients for two reasons. One, the product has a documented performance record and two, the ingredients cost a bit more because they do deliver a higher health value.

The Other Guys. What else is in your supplement is listed under "Other Ingredients". Hopefully it's a short list, preferably bioavailable to the human body. Often they are to stabilize or preserve the product, which would exclude the need for added colors, artificial ingredients. Sugar and common allergens (wheat, corn, milk, etc) are on the label for safety reasons.

Look Who's Talking. Customers tell others when they find a supplement that works for them. Their kudos are worth more than if a company toots its own horn. TyH calls our customer comments "Positively Speaking" and often shares reader success stories for that reason. Many of our customers are "lifers" who've been with us since we opened our doors. Loyalty speaks volumes (thank you!).



Your Guarantee. When a product is good, the guarantee backs it up. A 30-day guarantee is standard but a 90-day guarantee is better. TyH believes the healing process can not be rushed so we don't want to rush you. Guess that's why our return numbers are so low. Better products, better guarantee.

Cures & Claims. Legally, unless an ingredient has approval for a disease claim by the FDA (like glucosamine helping osteoarthritis), supplements can't claim to diagnose, treat, prevent or cure any disease. So be wary of any "cure" or "prevent" claims. Avoid the hype of the latest, greatest promises to "cure" and ask for evidentiary proof. The FDA does allow structure function wording, such as "CoQ10 supports heart health".

Go for GMP. Each industry has a "self-policing" group to help set industry standards. For the supplement industry, it is the Natural Products Association (NPA). The NPA worked with the FDA (the government regulator of supplements) to establish Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). A lab that has met stringent GMP is then inspected for certification to distinguish their products with this higher standard of quality. Additionally, the NPA also gives grades on GMP status based on third-party audits. TyH uses an "A" rated (the highest grade) GMP certified lab.



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Safety First. Testing is done repeatedly from source material to finished product to check for contaminants and adulterations (GMO, for one). Does the fish oil have mercury? Plants pesticides? Certain procedures – like molecularly distilled fish oils – are in place to guarantee purity. The extent to which a nutraceutical lab has the equipment and professionals to make sure products are safe is crucial since few companies own their own labs. TyH has personal onsite knowledge of our contracted lab and the manufacturing process for product safety.



Be on the Lookout. Lot number and expiration dates are imperative. In case of a rare recall, the lot can trace a product back to its source material to reveal the problem; and tracks purchasing stores and customers, thereby helping with containment. The expiration date is the date that a product starts losing its stated label potency. Since this varies per individual ingredients, the date will reflect the “weakest” link. Storage conditions (light, heat, humidity) by the lab, store and customer are factors that shorten or extend expiration dates, also.

Ingredients Matter. The bioavailable form of minerals, vitamins B12, D3 and so on have higher absorption and thus higher utilization by the body’s cells, tissues and organs. For instance, you need half the amount of natural vitamin E as synthetic. In the nutrient starved food many consume, there can be no place for nutrient starved supplements, too.

Education is Power. This is true for the customer and the company. The company gleans information from industry trade sources (organizations, publications, etc), published research and monographs; and health care professionals and associates on a continuous basis to stay current. This information is then passed on to you via newsletters, catalogs and customer inquiry. Often how well you know



what a product is, the benefits to you and potential drawbacks (if any) depend on how well the company knows and shares that information with you. What is the caliber of information you receive?

For more on how to maximize your benefits and minimize your risks, see *Supplements, Behind the Label* in our online Health Library. You’ll also find a glossary of common supplement terms and a listing of our trademark and patent ingredients at www.e-tyh.com. If you still have questions, call, write or email the editor@e-tyh.com.

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