3 Things to Look For Before Buying Supplements

A Simple Guide to Choosing Quality, Understanding Labels & Making Informed Decisions

Are You Getting What *You Think You're Paying For?*



QUALITY INGREDIENTS

TRUSTWORTHY SOURCES

UNDERSTAND LABELS

MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Supplements have their place.
Good food is never replaced.

By Ilene
LUV2LIVE ILENE

ONE INGREDIENT AT A TIME

First, What Is a Supplement?

Supplements are meant to supplement what we eat, not replace good nutrition. Whole foods provide a variety of nutrients that work together.

Supplements can also have a place. Some people use them to address a specific nutritional need; others include them in an ongoing wellness routine.

Before buying another bottle, I encourage you to ask a simple question: Is this product appropriate for me?

Start with good food. Then make informed choices, one ingredient at a time.

1. Know What’s in It

Not all supplements are created equal. I want to know where the ingredients come from, what is actually in the bottle, and whether the manufacturer can verify its quality.

Look for these four things

• Clearly identified ingredients and amounts

• Information about sourcing and manufacturing

• Independent testing or certification, when available

• A complete list of other ingredients

Remember: Whole-food-derived, organic, and non-GMO describe product characteristics. None automatically guarantees effectiveness or superior quality.



Choosing Quality Supplements

Know what the symbols actually tell you

Independent Verification

NSF®
Look for a named third-party certifier — and confirm the product in its online directory.

BSCG®
The Gold Standard for Sport. Third-party tested for quality, accuracy and safety.

Product Claims

Gluten-Free
Does not contain gluten.

Vegan
Contains no animal-derived ingredients.

Dairy-Free
Does not contain dairy or milk ingredients.

Non-GMO
Made without genetically modified ingredients.

Gluten-free, vegan, dairy-free and non-GMO can be helpful — but they do not automatically verify purity, potency or effectiveness.

Buy from the manufacturer or an authorized seller.

Dietary supplements are not FDA-approved for safety and effectiveness before sale.

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Quality Begins With Verification

Beautiful packaging catches our attention. What matters more is what the product contains.

Independent certifications, such as certain NSF or BSCG programs, can verify specific standards. Labels like vegan, gluten-free, dairy-free, or non-GMO communicate different information; they do not necessarily establish purity, potency, or effectiveness.

What’s Really in That Bottle?

In 2015, the New York Attorney General investigated selected herbal supplements sold by major retailers. The investigation reported concerns about roughly 79% of sampled products based on DNA testing.

The testing approach was disputed because processing can make plant DNA difficult to detect. The findings did not establish that 79% of all supplements were fraudulent.

The practical question: Can the manufacturer verify what is in the bottle?

Don’t Overlook “Other Ingredients”

Turn the bottle around. Fillers, binders, coatings, colors, and additives may appear in the Other Ingredients section. They are not automatically harmful; you deserve to know what you are consuming.



Anatomy of a Supplement Label

Supplement Facts

Serving Size 2 Capsules
Servings Per Container 30

Amount Per Serving		% Daily Value
Vitamin A (as beta-carotene)	900 mcg	100%
Vitamin C (as ascorbic acid)	90 mg	100%
Vitamin D (as cholecalciferol)	25 mcg (1,000 IU)	125%
Vitamin E (as d-alpha tocopherol)	15 mg	100%
Thiamin (as thiamine HCl)	1.2 mg	100%
Riboflavin	1.3 mg	100%
Niacin (as niacinamide)	16 mg	100%
Vitamin B6 (as pyridoxine HCl)	1.7 mg	100%
Folate (as L-5-methyltetrahydrofolate)	400 mcg DFE	100%
Vitamin B12 (as methylcobalamin)	2.4 mcg	100%
Biotin	30 mcg	100%
Pantothenic Acid (as calcium pantothenate)	5 mg	100%
Calcium (as calcium citrate)	200 mg	15%
Magnesium (as magnesium glycinate)	100 mg	24%
Zinc (as zinc picolinate)	11 mg	100%
Selenium (as selenomethionine)	55 mcg	100%
Copper (as copper glycinate)	0.9 mg	100%
Manganese (as manganese glycinate)	2.3 mg	100%
Chromium (as chromium picolinate)	35 mcg	100%
Molybdenum (as molybdenum glycinate)	45 mcg	100%
Proprietary Blend Turmeric Root Extract, Green Tea Leaf Extract, Ginger Root Extract, Black Pepper Extract	250 mg	**

** Daily Value not established.

Other Ingredients: Vegetable capsule (hypromellose), rice flour, magnesium stearate, silica.

1 Serving Size

Tells you how many capsules, tablets or other forms make one serving.

2 Servings Per Container

Tells you how many servings are in the bottle.

3 Amount Per Serving and % Daily Value

Shows how much of each nutrient is in one serving and what percentage of the daily value it provides.

4 Nutrients and Forms

Lists each vitamin, mineral or other ingredient and the form it uses (for example, as ascorbic acid or glycinate).

5 Minerals

Check the amounts and forms, especially if you take other supplements that contain the same nutrients.

6 Proprietary Blend

A combination of ingredients. The individual amounts are not listed.

7 Other Ingredients

Lists fillers, binders, coatings and other non-active ingredients.

2. Know Who You’re Buying From

Where you purchase a supplement matters. A lower price may be tempting, especially when you buy several products.

Third-party marketplaces can sometimes include unauthorized sellers, improperly stored products, or counterfeits. I prefer buying directly from the manufacturer or an authorized seller.

Five Questions Worth Asking

• Is this seller authorized?

• Can I identify and contact the manufacturer?

• Is the packaging intact?

• Is there a lot number and expiration date?

• Can the company answer my quality questions?

What About “Pharmaceutical Grade”?

That phrase sounds reassuring, but it is not a standardized U.S. regulatory designation for dietary supplements. Look for specific manufacturing standards and documented testing instead of relying on a marketing phrase.

Know the company behind the product—not just the name on the bottle.



3. Watch the Extras—They Add Up

You might take a multivitamin, a mineral supplement, a sleep formula, and a wellness blend. Each could contain some of the same nutrients.

Think About Salt in a Recipe

You salt the vegetables. Then add a seasoning blend that contains salt. Next comes a sauce with more salt.

You did not add a large amount all at once. It accumulated one ingredient at a time.

Supplements can work the same way. Vitamin A, vitamin D, zinc, selenium, magnesium, and other nutrients may appear in more than one bottle.

More is not always better. Excessive total intake of certain nutrients can cause harm.

A Simple Habit

Set your bottles side by side. Compare the Supplement Facts labels, including serving sizes and amounts. Look for repeated nutrients, and remember that fortified foods and drinks may add more.

If you are unsure about combinations, doses, or interactions with medications, review them with a qualified healthcare professional.

One bottle at a time. One ingredient at a time.



Your Supplement Shopping Checklist

☐ Do I understand why I am taking it?

☐ Are the ingredients and amounts clearly listed?

☐ Can the company explain its quality standards?

☐ Is independent testing available?

☐ Have I checked the Other Ingredients section?

☐ Am I buying from a trusted, authorized seller?

☐ Have I checked for nutrients I already take?

☐ Have I considered medications and my individual needs?

One Ingredient at a Time

You do not need to figure out every supplement in one afternoon. Start with one bottle. Read the label. Ask a few questions. Small, informed choices are a good place to begin.



Let’s Stay Connected

Understanding what we put into our bodies helps us make more informed wellness choices.

Have questions? I would love to connect and share what I have learned, including the products I have personally chosen to recommend.

Luv2Live Ilene

Website: luv2liveilene.com

Contact Me: luv2liveilene.com/contact-us

Products I Recommend: luv2liveilene.com/products

You’re Not Broken — You’re Blocked.

A Few Important Notes

Educational disclaimer: This guide is for general education and is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent disease. Supplements may interact with medications. Consult a qualified healthcare professional for personalized guidance.

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Bonus Resources

Two extra references to keep handy as you read labels and compare products.

01 4 Ways to Identify Bioengineered Foods

A visual reference to the different ways bioengineered food ingredients may be disclosed.

02 What?s Really in Your Supplements?

A visual supplement summary covering the basics, ingredient quality, and what verification can tell you.

Small, informed choices. One ingredient at a time.

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BONUS:

4 Ways

Bioengineered Food Ingredients May Be Disclosed



Food manufacturers have several options for informing the public when a product contains bioengineered ingredients.

The disclosure is not always on the front of the package and may not be in the ingredient list.

1 Written Disclosure on the Package



- May say "Bioengineered Food" or "Contains Bioengineered Food Ingredients."
- Can be on the front or another information panel.
- Does not have to be in the ingredient list.

2 USDA Bioengineered Food Symbol



- Manufacturers may use the official USDA bioengineered food symbol instead of written text.
- Look for this symbol on the package.

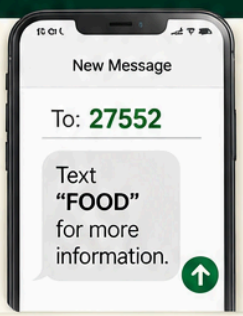
3 QR Code or Digital Link



Scan for More Food Information

- The package may direct you to scan a QR code for more food information.
- A phone number option must also be provided with this method.

4 Text Message



- The package may provide a number to text for bioengineered food information.
- Text the keyword provided (such as "FOOD") to the number on the package.

- These options are part of the USDA National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard.
- Some foods and small manufacturers are exempt.
- The absence of a disclosure does not necessarily mean a food is non-GMO.
- When in doubt, check the ingredient list, look for the USDA symbol, scan the QR code, or text the number provided.

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What's Really in Your Supplements?

Let's start with the basics and then look at the first thing to check before buying a supplement.



What Is a Supplement?

A supplement provides nutrients or other ingredients to complement what you're getting from your food.

Think of it as a convenient way to get specific nutrients in a capsule, tablet, liquid or powder. Sometimes supplements provide concentrated amounts that would be difficult to get through food alone.

I look at supplements in two ways:

Therapeutic Support
A targeted amount used to address a specific need, sometimes short-term, with appropriate professional guidance.

Maintenance Support
Ongoing nutritional support to help meet your body's needs over time.

The amount and duration depend on the nutrient and the individual.

Supplements have their place. Good food is never replaced.



1 Know What's In It

Quality Begins With the Ingredients

Not all supplements are created equal. One of the first things I look for is where the ingredients come from and whether the company can verify their quality.

I personally appreciate thoughtfully sourced ingredients, including whole-food-derived ingredients when appropriate. However, whole-food-derived doesn't automatically mean better. The form, amount, purity and evidence behind the ingredient matter.

Look for These Quality Indicators

Third-Party Testing
Independent verification of ingredients, potency and contaminants.

BSCG®
Third-party tested for quality, accuracy and safety.

USDA Organic
Verification of qualifying organic production standards.

Non-GMO Project Verified
Verification against GMO-avoidance standards.

Different certifications verify different things. Organic and non-GMO seals do not establish that a supplement is effective.

What Did Investigators Find in 2015?

In 2015, the New York State Attorney General investigated herbal supplements sold at four major retailers. The investigation reported that approximately 79% of the sampled products either lacked detectable DNA from their labeled herbs or contained other plant material. Some samples contained DNA associated with ingredients not listed on the label, raising questions about product identity and potential allergens, including rice, wheat and even houseplant species.

Scientists subsequently questioned whether the DNA-testing method could reliably identify ingredients in processed herbal extracts. The investigation did not prove that 79% of supplements were fraudulent. It did highlight why ingredient verification and independent quality testing deserve attention.

Are you choosing a supplement because of the beautiful packaging, or because you can verify what's inside?

Source: New York Times, February 3, 2015.

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