



A PATIENT GUIDE

How to choose a supplement worth taking

Supplements aren't reviewed by the FDA before they're sold the way prescription medicines are. Quality varies widely from one brand to the next — so knowing what to look for protects both your health and your money.

BEFORE YOU BUY, ASK THREE THINGS

1 **Has an independent lab verified it?**

Look for a **USP** or **NSF** seal. These groups both inspect the factory and test the actual product — not the company testing itself.

2 **Can the company show its testing?**

Reputable brands will provide a **Certificate of Analysis** for the batch you're taking, confirming what's inside and that it's free of contaminants like heavy metals.

3 Where did you buy it?

Buy from the brand directly or a trusted dispensary. Look-alike and counterfeit products are common on open marketplaces.

What the label is really telling you

ON THE LABEL "Third-party tested"

This phrase isn't regulated, so on its own it means very little. The useful questions are **which lab, testing for what, and how often**. A trusted certification seal or a Certificate of Analysis is the real proof.

ON THE LABEL "Made in USA"

This usually refers only to where the product was bottled or assembled. Most supplement raw materials are imported no matter what the label says, and it doesn't tell you anything about purity. **It's not a quality signal.**

ON THE LABEL "GMP" / "cGMP"

Good Manufacturing Practices are the **legal minimum** every U.S. supplement is supposed to meet — a floor, not a mark of distinction. Helpful to see, but not the same as independent verification.

The seals worth trusting

USP Verified

NSF Certified

Confirms the product contains what the label says, in the right amount, made in an audited facility. Widely recognized by pharmacists and doctors.

Tests the product and audits the factory. The "Certified for Sport" version screens each batch for the widest list of contaminants and banned substances.

ConsumerLab

An independent lab that buys products off the shelf and publishes its findings. A helpful check, though it doesn't inspect factories.

Certificate of Analysis

Not a seal, but the strongest proof of all — a lab report for the exact batch in your bottle. Quality brands share it on request.

One safety step that matters most

"Natural" does not mean "safe with everything." Some supplements interact with prescription medications — including those used for mood, focus, sleep, and blood pressure. A few common examples: St. John's Wort, 5-HTP, and high-dose melatonin, along with high-caffeine or stimulant-type herbal blends.

Please tell us about every supplement you take or are considering — even the ones that seem harmless — so we can check for interactions before you start.

Not sure where to start?

We can point you to specific, verified products through our practice dispensary — chosen for purity, independent testing, and a clean safety record, and matched to your care plan.

[Visit our dispensary →](#)

This guide is for general education and is not a substitute for individual medical advice. Supplements can have side effects and interactions; talk with your prescriber before starting, stopping, or combining any product — especially alongside prescription medication.

Integrative Mind Body Psychiatry

Beth J. Makar, PMHNP-BC, MSN, RN

Telehealth psychiatric care with a holistic mind-body-gut approach.