

Dietary supplement quality (US)

The large selection of brands and products available today can make purchasing supplements a daunting task. As a result, there are a number of important factors to consider when selecting and purchasing dietary supplements.

Quality standards are especially important to consider when purchasing supplements as they help ensure a product's safety and effectiveness. Consulting a healthcare practitioner and understanding supplement labels can help you choose the supplements that are best suited to your individual needs. Additionally, purchasing supplements from a trusted source can help ensure you are always getting safe, accurately labeled, and high-quality products.

Understanding dietary supplement regulations

Quality standard regulations help to ensure that the quality and integrity of ingredients and products are maintained along the entire supply chain, from ingredient sourcing and product manufacturing to storage, distribution, and consumption.

 In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates dietary supplement product and label guidelines under the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) of 1994. The FDA has also established Current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMPs), a set of requirements to which companies that manufacture, package, label, store, and/or distribute supplements must comply.



Selecting quality supplements

Supplements should always be purchased from a reputable and trusted source as resellers may not have proper warehousing standards, training programs for staff, or formal quality control, recall, and adverse reaction processes. Without adherence to proper quality practices, there is an increased risk of cross-contamination of ingredients, improper labeling, incorrect storage practices, expired ingredients, and other issues that may adversely impact an individual's health.

Reputable and trusted sources of dietary supplements include:

- Brand/manufacturer websites
- Certain specialty or health-food retailers
- Healthcare practitioners/clinics who stock supplements directly from the brand
- Virtual dispensaries that stock supplements directly from the brand (e.g., Fullscript)

Third-party certifications

In addition to the basic guidelines set by the FDA, manufacturers and distributors of dietary supplements may choose to follow various quality and manufacturing processes verified by third-party companies. Third-party companies provide unbiased assurance that certain quality criteria are met. In these cases, you will often see a certification mark on products indicating that they have been third-party verified.

Common third-party certifications include:

- Gluten-free (e.g., [Certified Gluten-Free](#))
- Non-GMO (e.g., [Non-GMO Project Verified](#))
- Organic (e.g., [USDA Organic](#), [Canada Organic](#))
- Vegan (e.g., [Certified Vegan](#))

Individual considerations

The definition of supplement quality can vary by individual, depending on your personal values, preferences, and factors such as allergies or sensitivities. While all supplements should adhere to basic quality measures, personal considerations can be taken into account to select the most appropriate product for your needs.



Quality-at-a-glance checklist

As a starting point when looking for high-quality supplements, ensure the product is sold by a verified distributor or directly by the brand. Additionally, you can use the following checklist to determine your own quality standards and requirements when purchasing supplements. You may also consider sharing your checklist with your integrative healthcare provider when discussing your treatment plan.

Choose the **label claim(s)** (not third-party verified) that are important to you:

- Animal product-free
- Artificial colour-free
- Artificial flavour-free
- Artificial preservative-free
- Artificial sweetener-free
- Casein-free
- Corn-free
- Dairy-free
- Egg-free
- Fish-free
- Gluten-free
- Milk-free
- Mustard-free
- Non-GMO
- Peanut-free
- Rice-free
- Salt-free
- Sesame-free
- Shellfish-free
- Soy-free
- Sugar-free
- Tree nut-free
- Wheat-free
- Whey-free
- Yeast-free

Choose the **third-party certification(s)** (independently verified) that are important to you:

- Certified B Corporation®
- Certified Gluten-Free
- Certified Halal
- Certified Organic
- Certified Vegan
- Current Good Manufacturing Practices (CGMP)
- Friend of the Sea
- Global Organization for EPA and DHA Omega-3 (GOED)
- International Fish Oil Standards (IFOS)
- Informed-Choice
- Informed-Sport
- International Organization for Standardization (ISO)
- Kosher Check
- MOSA Certified Organic
- Non-GMO Project Verified
- National Sanitation Foundation (NSF)
- NSF Certified for Sport
- Underwriter Laboratories (UL)
- USDA Organic
- U.S. Pharmacopeia (USP)
- Vegan
- Vegetarian

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This handout was developed and medically reviewed by Fullscript's Integrative Medical Advisory team.

*These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This information is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease.

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