



WELLNESS CENTER

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Considerations for Dietary Supplements

Dietary supplements are products that are intended to supplement the diet differently from conventional foods. Examples of dietary supplements include minerals, vitamins, protein powders, and pre-workout among other products. Often these supplements are marketed to aid, benefit, support, or cure various illness or more generally promote improved health and wellbeing. Under the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), it is the responsibility of the supplement companies to ensure safety standards of the products and ensure no violations are occurring. Due to the lack of uniform regulation by the FDA, there are several important pieces of information to be aware of in order to make informed decisions prior to the use of supplements.

Does the supplement have a nutrition facts label or a supplement facts label? If a nutrition facts label is present, the product is considered a food and is therefore regulated by the FDA. If the product has a supplements facts label the FDA has not regulated to product prior to hitting the shelves for purchase. As such, you cannot be sure what is listed on the label is actually what is in the product.

Does the product have any quality assurance? To check for quality assurance, third-party organizations can help identify various points of the supplement's quality and provide further information whether or not the supplement meets standards. Below are three resources to use when considering if a supplement has been third party verified.

- NSF.org
- Choice.wetestyourtrust.com
- Usp.org

Does the product use any proprietary blends or herbal blends? Companies that use proprietary or herbal blends generally do not disclose all ingredients in the product or the amounts of each ingredient. Take caution when considering use of a product that has either of these blends listed as the company likely has omitted information. The Natural Medicines Database (NMD) is a resource to evaluate ingredients you may not recognize.

What is the effectiveness of the supplement? How much evidenced based research exists for this supplement or ingredient? There are several helpful questions to consider when thinking about use of a supplement. It is important to make informed decisions from on evidenced research – check your sources! Is there sufficient research to support the claims that are being made? What dosage of the supplement is best for the claims to take effects? Are there food sources that offer the same nutrients as the supplement? What is the bioavailability of the supplement?

If you are interested in beginning a supplement and seeking support or guidance, consider scheduling an appointment with a registered dietitian. To schedule an appointment, call 773-508-8883 or book online at <https://www.luc.edu/wellness/nutrition/>.