

## Dietary Supplements: Helpful Tools or Hidden Risks?

Dietary supplements — including vitamins, minerals, herbs, and other natural products — are used by more than half of adults in the U.S. Many people take them to boost energy, support immunity, improve sleep, or address specific health concerns. While supplements can be helpful in certain situations, they are not risk-free and should be used thoughtfully and with guidance from a healthcare provider.

### Potential Benefits of Supplements

Supplements can play a useful role when:

- A person has a documented deficiency (such as vitamin D, iron, or B12)
- Dietary intake is limited (for example, vegetarian or restricted diets)
- Certain life stages increase needs (pregnancy, aging, intense physical training)
- Medical conditions affect absorption (such as celiac disease or bariatric surgery)

When appropriately selected, supplements may support bone health, immune function, and metabolic processes. ***They should not be considered a substitute for medical therapy or a balanced diet.***

### Potential Risks of Supplements

Many people assume supplements are always safe because they are “natural.” This is not always true.

- **Drug-supplement interactions** (e.g., vitamin K with anticoagulants; St. John’s wort with antidepressants and oral contraceptives, magnesium or calcium affecting absorption of certain medications).
- **Toxicity from excessive dosing**, particularly with fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K) and minerals such as iron or selenium.
- **Variable product quality**, including inaccurate labeling or contamination
- **Delay in diagnosis or treatment** when supplements are used in place of appropriate medical evaluation

### Identifying High-Quality Supplements

Not all supplements are created equal. Here are key signs of a high-quality product:

- **Independent third-party testing.** Look for verification from organizations such as USP, NSF, or other independent testing labs.
- **Clear labeling.** The label should list exact dosages, all active and inactive ingredients, and manufacturer contact information.
- **Evidence-based ingredients.** Avoid products with exaggerated claims like “miracle cure” or “guaranteed results.”
- **Professional-grade sourcing.** Products distributed through healthcare platforms are often held to higher quality standards than many retail brands.

## Why We Recommend Fullscript for Supplements

At Inspire Integrative Medicine, we utilize [Fullscript.com](https://www.fullscript.com) to provide patients with access to professional-grade supplements that meet high quality and safety standards. Fullscript offers:

- Products from trusted, practitioner-vetted brands
- Independent quality testing
- Transparent labeling
- Direct shipping to your home
- Direct-to-patient delivery

This ensures patients are getting supplements that meet safety and quality standards — not just what happens to be on a store shelf.

## Provider Guidance Is Essential

Before starting any supplement, it's important to discuss it with your healthcare provider. This helps ensure:

- It's appropriate for your health condition
- It won't interact with medications
- The dose is safe
- You actually need it

Your provider may recommend blood tests or dietary changes instead of — or in addition to — supplements.

## The Bottom Line

Supplements can be beneficial when used correctly, but they are not harmless and should not be taken casually. Quality matters, dosing matters, and medical guidance matters.

If you are considering supplements or already taking them, please let your provider know. We can help you choose safe, effective options and avoid unnecessary risks.

For patients who need supplements, we recommend using [Fullscript.com](https://www.fullscript.com) to ensure quality, transparency, and consistency.

Your health is best supported with a combination of:

- A balanced diet
- Evidence-based medicine
- Thoughtful use of supplements when truly needed

If you have questions about supplements, please contact our office or discuss them at your next visit.

## References

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5. Natural Medicines Database. Drug–Supplement Interaction Checker. Therapeutic Research Center.
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