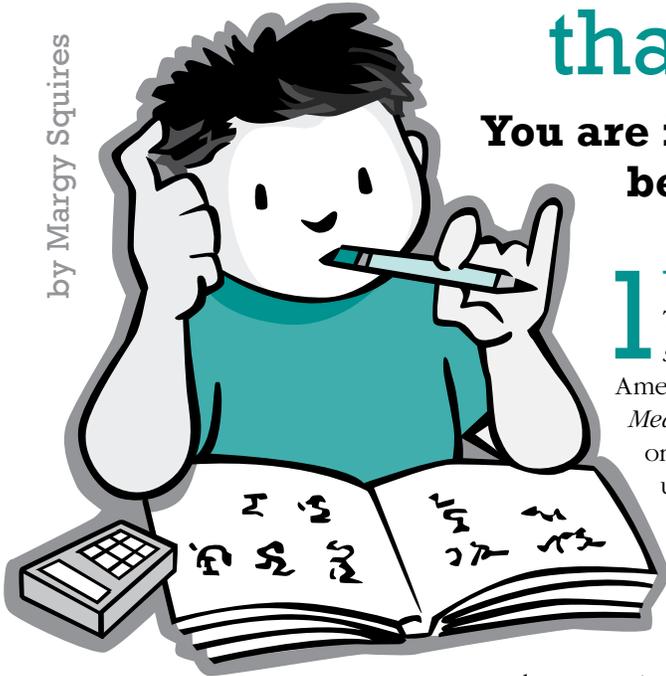


Q&A

by Margy Squires



Are You Smarter than a 5th Grader?

You are if you ask yourself these questions before you buy a supplement!

1 What's in it for me?

The most important question to ask is *why am I buying this supplement?* Taking a daily supplement is recommended by the American Dietetic Association website and the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (JAMA 2002). How much you supplement depends on many things like your diet, personal needs, age and medication use. Since many foods Americans consume aren't the daily 5 portions each of fruits and veggies, dairy and omega friendly fish, how's your diet? When you decide what your nutritional deficiencies are, you're ready to choose the appropriate supplement. Maybe you're buying for specific health reasons to build bones, lower cholesterol or have more energy. A little education will go a

long way in knowing which nutrients fit the criteria. Start with a multiple as a foundational product and then single supplements beyond that. TyH's *Get With the Program* kits are one way to help you choose and custom design a plan specifically for you.

2 What does the product promise?

Designer supplements are getting as pricey as designer jeans. The FDA allows only certain claims for supplements in what they call "structure-function". For example, omega 3 fatty acids are considered heart healthy and calcium does help build bones. (For other allowed claims, visit <http://dietary-supplements.info.NIH.gov>.) Buyer beware, though. Just because an ingredient is listed on the front of the label, how much is really inside? Be sure to check the Facts Box on the back of the bottle. While lycopene, lutein and CoQ10 have obvious benefits, research is very specific on the amounts required. Check to see if you're getting a token or therapeutic amount. See the next question.

3 How long do I have to take the product before I see results?

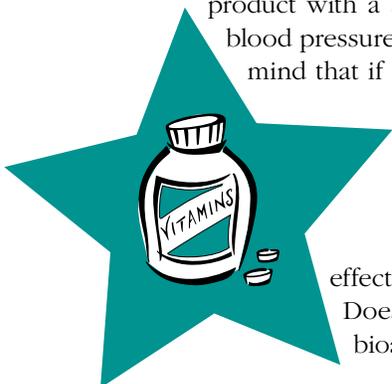
Some products work over a period of time and need a commitment. For instance, glucosamine sulfate helps increase mobility and reduce pain in joints but only if taken at 1500 mg daily for at least three months. If you buy into the benefit, follow through with the commitment. Likewise, cholesterol lowering products may take a similar time. For any product with a specific purpose like helping with blood sugar, cholesterol or blood pressure control, monitoring results with testing is a good idea. Keep in mind that if you're on medications, your doctor should be advised on your plan to pursue a supplement option.

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4 How do I make sure I'm getting the best product?

The FDA has label guidelines that supplement manufacturers must follow. You should always find a lot number and expiration date. The source of the ingredients is key for effectiveness, especially if based on research. If the product is an herb, where it's from is critical. Does it have a particular extract amount needed, such as 0.8% valerenic acid for valerian root? For bioavailability, minerals must be a true chelate. Magnesium should list as glycinate or malate on the

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continued

label and not the cheaper non-chelate oxide. You'll only benefit from effective research if that ingredient is actually in the product you're about to buy. Again, educating yourself is the best way to recognize quality when you see it.

5 What's all this "other stuff" listed on the label?

Most of the "other stuff" is listed under inactive ingredients and may include drying agents for capsules and stabilizers for tablets. Some tablets have a glaze (like our natural vanilla) which makes it easier to swallow. If you're unsure, ask. Labels will list whether a product has yeast, wheat, milk, etc for those who might have allergies. What you don't want to see are artificial colors and other ingredients which provide no benefit to product stability or effectiveness.



6 Who is making the supplement?

In surveys that ask why a person takes a supplement, more than 70% list a health reason. For the health of it, know your supplier. If you're buying online, click on the *Contact* or *About Us* button. Is there a name there or an anonymous person behind that product you're about to swallow? Reputable companies don't mind if you ask questions. Where is the product made? Does the laboratory follow Good Manufacturing Procedures regulated by the industry to safeguard against impurities of raw materials and to maintain safety standards? Does the product undergo disintegration tests so it will break down in your body? Are assays performed for potency so you're getting what's on the label? Your health return is only as good as the product your supplier makes.

7 Is there a guarantee?

The real question is *can you get your money back?* Hopefully if you've done your research and know why you're taking a supplement, you'll have a reasonable expectation of results to limit unnecessary returns. While guarantees are at least 30 days, many companies offer 90 days to give you time to try a product and obtain a result. If you ask about the guarantee and get a hesitant response, take your money elsewhere. A good guarantee comes with a good product!

8 Does the supplement conflict with a current medication I may be taking?

If you have a health care professional who is knowledgeable about supplements, ask before buying. Most advise against taking 5-HTP with selective serotonin

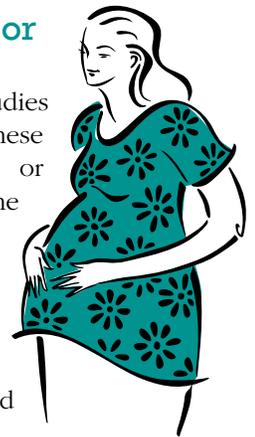
re-uptake drugs for example. If you're on thyroid, you may be advised to wait two hours before consuming calcium and fiber which may interfere with absorption. Another important question to ask is if the medication you're taking depletes any of your nutrients. Statins and some diabetic drugs lower CoQ10 levels. Antibiotics strip the GI tract of beneficial bacteria which affects mineral, vitamin K and B vitamin absorption. Anti-fungals limit mineral absorption as well. Corticosteroids affect most minerals, as well as vitamins C, D, B6, B12 and folic acid. Aspirin and salicylates reduce vitamin C, calcium, iron, folic acid and B5. Tricyclic antidepressants lower CoQ10 and B2. This is only a partial listing! Ask your prescribing doctor how to compensate for any nutritional losses. Some will test for deficiencies and monitor for you at regular intervals. Just like you maintain accurate records on how and what you take for medications, do the same for your supplements. Keep your doctor informed of any changes.

9 Do I have an upcoming surgery or procedure scheduled?

Many physicians and surgeons require a "clearing period" of 5-10 days before a procedure or surgery, especially if it involves anesthesia and/or wound healing. Whether the supplement interferes with the process or not, always follow your healthcare professional's advice so that you do not mix an unknown variable into the equation.

10 Am I planning a pregnancy, pregnant or nursing?

Common sense dictates that research studies cannot include study subjects that fit these criteria for the safety of the unborn or nursing child. Therefore, a warning for the supplement or product not to be taken without medical supervision may appear on advertising or in the directions for use. Check with your obstetrician before any supplement use under these conditions as what you take will invariably be passed along to your child.



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