

## ✓ Educate Yourself

It's important to use reliable, scientifically sound information on dietary supplements for your health decisions. Share this information with your health professional and ask for their ideas.

## ✓ Choose Quality Supplements

The quality of the supplements you select is just as important as the type of products you take. Consider the following when selecting a brand:

- Is the product from a reputable manufacturer? If in doubt, ask your health care professional to recommend a reliable brand that carries the USP mark.
- Does the manufacturer have a toll-free number and Web site where you can get information from qualified professionals and ask questions?
- Does the label make claims that seem too good to be true? Use caution.

## ✓ Know Safe Supplement Tips

**Read the label.** Follow dosage instructions carefully.

**Look for warning statements.** Pay special attention if you take prescription medication, are pregnant or lactating, have allergies, or pre-existing conditions.

**Purchase quality products.** Consult with your health care professional or registered dietitian to recommend a brand they trust. Look for the USP mark.

**Be sure to share all supplement use with your health care provider.** For optimal health choices, open and accurate communication is key.

This brochure will give you tips on:

- The importance of discussing your vitamin use with your health care professional
- How to select a quality vitamin brand
- How to read a vitamin label
- Safe supplement tips



## Dietary Supplement Resources

- **U.S. Pharmacopeia Verified Dietary Supplements** <http://www.usp.org>  
Lists all the supplements that have been verified by USP.
- **Medline Plus®** <http://medlineplus.gov/>  
Extensive information about drugs and supplements and access to medical journal articles.
- **The American Botanical Council** <http://www.herbalgram.org> Database of information about herbal supplements.
- **The Council for Responsible Nutrition** [www.crnusa.org](http://www.crnusa.org) Resource for latest information on dietary supplement regulation, scientific studies and legislation.



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# Health Sense

## A Consumer's Guide to Smart Vitamin Use



# Did you know?

- More than 150 million Americans take a vitamin or dietary supplement daily
- 64% of Americans take prescription drugs in addition to a vitamin/mineral supplement daily
- Improving our daily nutrition is very important but not everyone is well informed on the key facts about safe vitamin use or smart tips on how to choose a quality product
- Many people forget to share their use of all vitamins, minerals, herbs and other over the counter (OTC) products with their health care provider
- Many health care providers don't always ask their patients about dietary supplement use
- Good communication and open dialogue between health professionals and patients improves patient health and encourages a focus on important prevention activities



## Visting your Health Professional? Consult this Check List

### Review Your Chart

Be sure your health care professional knows and writes down all dietary supplements you take, even if taken infrequently. Write them down before your appointment and bring the list with you. Some dietary supplements interfere with prescription and over-the-counter drugs so it is important to provide information about dosage and frequency of use.

Supplements	Brand Name	Dosage	How long you've been taking

Ask about your prescription medicine and nutrient deficiencies. Certain prescription medications can deplete essential nutrients in your body. Ask your provider how you can compensate.

### Discuss Lifestyle Changes

Are you on a diet? Do you eat smaller or irregular meals? Do you smoke or drink alcohol? If so, you may be missing certain nutrients that are a necessary part of a healthy diet (i.e. iron, B-12, calcium, etc.). Discuss which vitamins may help fill nutritional gaps in your diet.

# How to Read a Vitamin Label?

**1. % Daily Value (DV):** Daily Values (DV) are recommended nutrient intake levels for healthy individuals. These figures are based on Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) established by the Institutes of Medicine (IOM). Percentage DV figures identify what percent of a given nutrient is obtained from a single supplement serving.

**2. Serving Size:** This shows consumers how many caplets, tablets or soft gels they need to take to reach the percent Daily Value or amounts indicated on the label.

**3. Scientific Units:** Scientific units such as "I.U.," "mg" and mcg" are different ways to measure the amounts of vitamins, minerals and herbs in each tablet or soft gel.

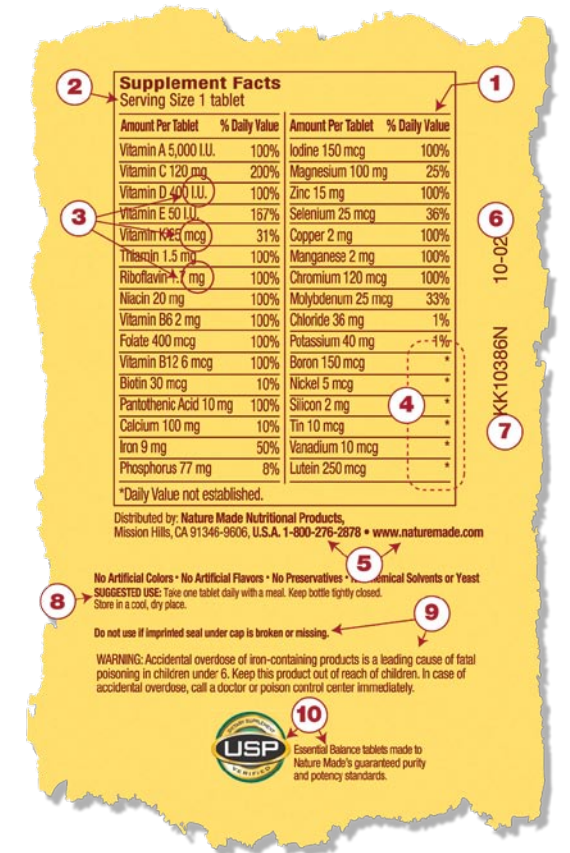
**4. Necessary Nutrients without a DV:** These are contained in supplements to help consumers gain health benefits from substances for which the IOM has not yet established guidelines.

**5. Manufacturer's Contact Information:** Responsible manufacturers always include a toll-free number and web site for the public to call and ask questions.

**6. Expiration Dates:** These are put on vitamin bottles to let consumers know how long the ingredients will be effective. Supplements should not be used after the expiration date as they may not be as effective.

**7. Lot Numbers:** These are a series of letters and numbers that help track a product's history. If you have questions about a specific product, the manufacturer may request the lot number to help track the product's manufacturing history.

**8. Suggested Use:** Helps inform consumers how to safely and correctly obtain the recommended amount. Manufacturers will also include other useful information, such as the best time to take the supplement and where it should be stored.



**9. Warning Labels:** Warnings labels help consumers understand the potential side effects of taking a supplement. People on prescription medication, pregnant or lactating mothers, people with serious medical conditions or people with allergies should be particularly aware of warnings on package labels and should always consult their health provider before taking a supplement.

**10. Quality Marks and Statements:** For example, the USP verification mark for dietary supplements indicates that all manufacturing processes and operations used to make the dietary supplement have been audited by the United States Pharmacopeia (USP). For herbal supplements, choose a product with a quality mark from a manufacturer whose products meet or exceed FDA good manufacturing practices (GMPs) and who guarantees its products for purity, potency and quality.

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