Supplement Label Decoder

How to read a Supplement Facts panel in two minutes

1. Serving size

- ☐ Every amount on the panel is per serving.
- ☐ Check how many capsules, gummies, or scoops make one serving.
- ☐ Use servings per container to compare real cost.

2. % Daily Value (%DV)

- ☐ 5% DV or less per serving is low. 20% DV or more is high (FDA).
- ☐ Children's products may show a separate %DV column by age.
- ☐ An asterisk with "Daily Value not established" means there is no reference amount.
- ☐ Add up any nutrient that shows up in more than one product, including fortified foods.

3. Forms (the words in parentheses)

- ☐ **Magnesium:** citrate, aspartate, lactate, and chloride tend to be absorbed better than oxide or sulfate (NIH).
- ☐ **Folate:** listed in mcg DFE. Folic acid is the synthetic form. Methylfolate (5-MTHF) is the main form in the blood.
- ☐ **Vitamin D:** D3 (cholecalciferol) may raise blood levels higher and longer than D2 (NIH). Take with a meal that has some fat.
- ☐ **Iron:** the panel lists elemental iron, so you do not need to do the math.

4. Proprietary blends

- ☐ Ingredients are listed in order by weight.
- ☐ Only the total weight of the blend is required, not the amount of each ingredient.
- ☐ If the key ingredient sits inside a blend, you cannot tell how much you are getting.

5. Other ingredients

- ☐ Fillers, binders, and flavorings are listed here.
- ☐ Look for added sugars, sugar alcohols, colors, gelatin, and allergens.

6. Third-party seals

- ☐ Look for USP Verified, NSF Certified, or ConsumerLab.com.
- ☐ Seals mean the product was properly made, contains what the label says, and was checked for harmful contaminants.
- ☐ Seals do not guarantee a product is safe or effective for you.
- ☐ NSF Certified for Sport adds screening for substances banned in sports.

> **Remember:** FDA does not approve dietary supplements for safety or effectiveness before they are sold. The label is your best tool, and your healthcare provider can help you decide what fits your needs.

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Sources: NIH Office of Dietary Supplements fact sheets; FDA Daily Value guidance; 21 CFR 101.36; USP; NSF. This page is for educational purposes only and is not medical advice. Talk with your healthcare provider before starting, stopping, or changing any supplement or medication.