

How to Choose a Supplement That's Right for You

When it comes to dieting and eating the right foods for the greater good of your health, it may require that you substitute some vitamins and nutrients with the right supplements. The challenge in this journey is finding the right supplement that is right for you. Here is a guide to helping you choose which supplements work best for you and your lifestyle.



Introduction

According to the NTA, nutritional supplements play a key role in supporting the overall well-being of many of the clients collaborating with our graduates. The organization acknowledges there is not a one-size-fits-all list of supplements that meets the needs of every client. Instead, NTPs (Nutritional Therapy Practitioners) are trained to utilize their nutrition education, clinical tools, and research skills to uncover the potential nutrient deficiencies of each client. This ensures that they know how to make appropriate recommendations (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Throughout the core curriculum, NTPs develop a framework for approaching supplements through the lens of the nutritional foundations and learn to grow in their ability to make quality supplement recommendations as they continue their education. The supplement education provided in the NTP program is aimed at providing education on essential nutritional support and the optimal function of foundational body systems. Graduates are required to dive deeper into more advanced areas of supplementation.

The NTA suggests that students and graduates with no additional training or experience beyond the core program are only qualified to make supplement quantity recommendations by supplement manufacturer recommendations. Only practitioners have received advanced education on the use of supplements, they are to stay within the recommended quantity identified on the product label.

Until Nutritional Therapy Practitioners have grown in their practice or advanced their knowledge of supplemental support, they can professionally recommend higher supplement quantities. The information provided here is not meant to be construed as medical advice and has not been evaluated by the FDA. As an NTP, you are not permitted to diagnose or treat conditions. In addition, all supplement recommendations must be framed as supportive nutrients to aid in the function of the body as related to the client's primary concerns (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).



Understanding What Supplements Are and How They Are Used

There is an overwhelming amount of information available for consumers regarding dietary supplements. To understand the basics of how nutritional supplements are legally defined, it is easiest to go to the source of the regulation in the U.S. That's right! I'm talking about the FDA. According to the Food Drug Administration, dietary supplements were designed to add to

or supplement a diet and are different from conventional food (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

The FDA provides general insight into supplements by stating that these products are meant to treat, diagnose, cure, or prevent diseases. Supplements are classified as drugs even if they are labeled as dietary supplements. Supplements can come in many forms, including tablets, capsules, soft gels, gel caps, powders, bars, gummies, and

liquids. There are a variety of supplements that you would find on your local store shelves or online. Some of those common supplements include Vitamins, such as multivitamins, or individual vitamins like Vitamin D and Biotin (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

Minerals such as calcium, magnesium, and iron are also other relevant examples of supplements. Other examples of supplements include Botanicals and botanical compounds, Amino acids, and Live microbial, which are commonly referred to as probiotics (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2022).

Dietary Reference Intakes

As an NTP, it is important to understand dietary reference intakes, which include four different types of categories. Those categories are tolerable upper intake level, estimated average requirement, recommended dietary allowance, and adequate intake. Some of these categories, if not all of them, could come into play when you'll have to determine which supplements and foods are ideal for your client. As an NTP, you should make it a priority to get familiar with the terminology so that you're capable of speaking to what they are if your client has questions about a product.

To better understand the nutrition measures and their history, read this article from the Institute of Medicine <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK208878/>.

Choosing a Quality Supplement

When deciding on a quality supplement, there are a lot of factors to take into consideration. First, we must understand dietary supplements have limited regulation. This means it can be difficult to determine which products are of high quality and which ones should be avoided entirely. The best way to assess if a product is of high quality or not is by first understanding what exactly this means. A product of high quality means that it is of raw material sourcing, up-to-date on expiration best practices, and production procedures. These can all be checked by going through a third-party certified organization (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

If a product has gone through this type of quality testing, then it is likely documented on its marketing materials or on the product itself. One type of quality testing is checking on a product's manufacturing process and practices. Just like our food, sourcing ingredients a supplement. The manufacturer's website should have more details on their best, processing steps, and sustainability of growth and harvesting practices should all

be considered when choosing practices. You can also contact a representative for more information about the company's facilities and if possible schedule a tour.

Product Fillers

There are many other things to consider when choosing the right supplement. In addition to the sourcing ingredients and harvesting methods, product fillers should also be considered. Supplements can contain many ingredients to help with the function of their product by acting as a preservative. Typically, the fewer of these other ingredients the better, but it depends upon the mode of delivery, whether it is in capsule, tablet, or liquid form. Always consult your family practitioner first or contact the manufacturer if unsure of an ingredient (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Potential Allergens and Sensitivities

Like any other practitioner, it is important to know and be aware if your client has any allergies or not. As you are researching and recommending supplements, make sure the product is equipped for your client when it comes to any sensitivities.

A set of food allergens found [here](#)

These food allergens are required by law to be listed on every product and label. However, that is not all-inclusive therefore you will need to consider all ingredients when looking through a scope of bio-individuality. If you know your client has an allergy or is sensitive to a specific ingredient, and you're unsure if it is present in a product, it is recommended that you contact the manufacturer to get a definitive answer (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

When to Recommend Supplements vs. Food Sources of Nutrients



When recommending a supplement, there's a lot more to consider outside of the obvious factors such as fillers and allergens. You want to make sure that you are choosing a supplement that financially fits your client, that is easily accessible, meets their standards and preferences, is of nutrient content, timeline, and contraindications.

Financial

It's important that you are considering your client's financial status when selecting a supplement. Make sure you have a conversation with them about what their budget is and how much they are willing to spend. If you are unable to find a single product that's in their budget, consider doing a combination of supplements. Be sure to have a conversation with them about combining supplements and what the risks may or may not be. Keep in mind, that there are many HSA (Health Savings Account) plans that allow the purchase of supplements (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Access

When researching the best supplement for your client, make sure you also consider their location or the region they live. Remember to ask yourself, do they live or work in an area that has limited food access? Or do they live or work in a region where quality supplements are not available? Asking these questions and considering these factors

will help you determine the best supplement for your client (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Preference

If your client has a preference for certain products or ingredients, then you should do your best to accommodate them. If your client prefers to start with food before actually taking supplements, make sure you are finding the right foods that meet their expectations. You want to also understand what their level of comfort is when it comes to taking supplements. You can do this by asking about their history of taking supplements. Make sure you understand their thoughts, perspective, and feelings on them. If you have a skeptical client, then they may not be the right candidate for supplements until you're able to build their trust (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Nutrient Content

Ask yourself if your client could realistically receive the needed nutrients from food. If not, then it may be better to consider getting it from a concentrated amount in a supplement (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Timeline

We've all heard before that timing is everything. This concept applies to the severity of a client's health. Ask yourself, is your client's symptoms severe enough to advise the use of a supplement in order to give more support, or does time allow you to be more strategic and take your time by going with a more long-term food-based approach? Either way, the timeline of searching for a supplement should always be considered (Nutritional Therapy Association, n.d.).

Contraindications

Remember to always consider any contraindications your client may have when formulating your approach.

Commented [1]: Could you provide more insight for me on what exactly this means? I want to elaborate for the reader.

Conclusion



So let's summarize what we've discussed in this blog. As an NTA, when it comes to suggesting or advising a client on a supplement you want to make sure that all of your ducks are in order. First, make sure you understand and have full knowledge of the terminology of products and supplements. You should also understand how supplements what supplements are exactly and how they are used. Even though you may know what they are and how to use them yourself, your understanding and a client's understanding are two different things. You want to make sure you are capable of passing the correct information on to a client in a way that they will understand.

In addition, make sure you are aware of the risk factors that come into play when supplementing. For example, be aware of brands that could have product fillers in them. Remember, the fewer fillers there are the more healthy. In thinking about this, you want to also know your client and their health history. Meaning, keep in mind any allergies or sensitivities they may have. Lastly, make sure you are staying within their budget and preferences. At the end of the day, you want your client to live a happy healthy lifestyle and as an NTA it is your responsibility to make sure that happens.

Sources

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