

Facts About Dietary Supplement Labels



What is a dietary supplement?

Product that contains "dietary ingredients" (such as vitamins, minerals, herbs, amino acids, or other dietary substance) intended to supplement the diet.¹



What are supplement facts labels?

Labels required for display on all dietary supplements by the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA).²

Supplement Facts Label Components

Image source: https://ods.od.nih.gov/HealthInformation/ODS_Frequently_Asked_Questions.aspx

Serving Information

The recommended amount to consume to receive the nutrients in the amount listed. Often represented in terms of number of tablets, gel caps, or capsules.²

NOTE: One capsule, gelcap, or tablet is not always the serving size. Oftentimes, you'll see 2 or more capsules are needed to be consumed as a serving size

Dietary Ingredient List

List of all dietary ingredients included in the supplement.²

Other Ingredients

Non-dietary ingredients like artificial sweeteners, colors, or flavors listed in order of predominance by weight.²

Serving Size 1 Gelcap Servings Per Container 100		
	Amount Per Serving	% Daily Value
Vitamin A (as retinyl acetate and 50% as beta-carotene)	900 mcg	
Vitamin C (as ascorbic acid)	90 mg	
Vitamin D (as cholecalciferol)	20 mcg (800 IU)	
Vitamin E (as di-alpha tocopheryl acetate)	15 mg	100%
Thiamin (as thiamin mononitrate)	1.2 mg	100%
Riboflavin	1.3 mg	100%
Niacin (as niacinamide)	16 mg	100%
Vitamin B ₆ (as pyridoxine hydrochloride)	1.7 mg	100%
Folate	400 mcg DFE (240 mcg folic acid)	100%
Vitamin B ₁₂ (as cyanocobalamin)	2.4 mcg	100%
Biotin	3 mcg	10%
Pantothenic Acid (as calcium pantothenate)	5 mg	100%
Other ingredients: Gelatin, lactose, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, FD&C Yellow No. 6, propylene glycol, preservatives (propylparaben and sodium benzoate).		

NOTE:

Supplements must have a statement on the label identifying it as a dietary supplement

Amount Per Serving

Amount of each of the dietary ingredients (by weight) in one serving of the supplement.²

Percent Daily Value (%DV)

Daily Values (DV) are reference amounts for how much of each nutrient to consume in a day. Percent DV indicates how much a serving is contributing to the overall recommended DV for each nutrient.³

NOTE: The %DV listed is for all people ages 4 and older. However, not every ingredient in a dietary supplement is a nutrient. If a %DV is missing, it means there is no established %DV for the ingredient listed.

 = unique to Supplement Facts Labels

compared to Nutrition Facts Labels on conventional food & beverage products

If a dietary supplement label includes a structure/function claim about how the supplement may affect organs or other bodily systems, you should see the disclaimer on the label or package:

"This statement has not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease."

This is to inform consumers that, while a structure/function claim is made on this dietary supplement label, the FDA has not actually reviewed and approved the claim before the product is available in the market.

Other Important Considerations

Overall, current law does not require the FDA to approve dietary supplements before they are marketed and sold. This includes limited (if any) oversight on the ingredients (composition), safety, and effectiveness of a supplement! Therefore, consumers should **consult with their healthcare providers** and be diligent at scrutinizing supplements before consuming them.

INGREDIENTS

While supplements are required to list all ingredients included, the **FDA does not conduct any testing to confirm the accuracy of ingredients listed** (some listed may be missing or some not listed may be included).^{1,2}

Supplements are allowed to use the term **"proprietary blend"** to describe a combination of ingredients that are not disclosed. The purpose of this is to allow for protection of trade secrets or formulas, but it can make evaluating it as a consumer difficult.^{1,2}

The FDA is limited to **post-market enforcement of safety**, meaning they can only remove a product from market if they can prove the product is unsafe (& only after it is already in the market).⁴

SAFETY

It is important to **consult your healthcare provider** to ensure the ingredients & serving size appropriate for your individual needs, age, gender, weight, and pre-existing health conditions.⁴

EFFECTIVENESS

The FDA does not require that a supplement prove its efficacy or claims prior to being sold, which means **scientific evidence to support claims varies significantly**.^{1,2}

For more information on dietary supplements, visit the Office of Dietary Supplements: <https://ods.od.nih.gov/>

References:

1. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Questions and Answers on Dietary Supplements. Updated Feb 21, 2024. Accessed Feb 17, 2025. <https://www.fda.gov/food/information-consumers-using-dietary-supplements/questions-and-answers-dietary-supplements>
2. Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), National Institutes of Health (NIH). Background Information: Dietary Supplements. Updated Mar 11, 2020. Accessed Jan 28, 2025. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/DietarySupplements-Consumer/>
3. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). How to Understand and Use the Nutrition Facts Label. Updated Mar 5, 2024. Accessed Dec 18, 2024. <https://www.fda.gov/food/nutrition-facts-label/how-understand-and-use-nutrition-facts-label#:~:text=The%20Daily%20Values%20are%20reference%20amounts%20expressed%20as%20a%20total%20daily%20diet>
4. Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS), National Institutes of Health (NIH). Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ). Updated Mar 21, 2023. Accessed Jan 28, 2025. https://ods.od.nih.gov/HealthInformation/ODS_Frequently_Asked_Questions.aspx