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Guidelines For Choosing Vitamin & Mineral Supplements

by Raymond Francis

To choose among supplements by comparing labels can be of little value. Two identical labels can be two completely different products. The difference in quality can depend on the following:

1. Type, quality, and age of raw materials used
2. Method used to ship the raw materials
3. Handling of the raw materials
4. Storage of the raw materials
5. Manufacturing process
6. Packaging

Manufacturers can play many games with how they list ingredients on labels. Without talking to the manufacturer and getting first-hand knowledge of what is being purchased, it is not possible to know what is really in the pill. However, the following is a quick and easy test for assessing the overall quality of a vitamin or mineral supplement. Products that do not meet this test are of low quality. Products that do meet this test may or may not be of high quality, but the probability of good quality is increased. A further investigation into the six items listed above would have to be conducted to truly assess the quality of the vitamin/supplement.

The first thing to look at is the type of chemical compounds that are listed for the minerals. Look at the major minerals like calcium, magnesium and zinc. What forms are they in?

Low-quality formulas will contain cheap ingredients with low absorption rates. Here is what to look for - and avoid:

Low Absorption/Bioactivity	Medium Absorption/Bioactivity
Carbonate (calcium carbonate)	Aminoate
Oxide (magnesium oxide)	Chelate
Phosphate	Gluconate
Sulfate	

High-quality formulas will contain more expensive ingredients with maximum absorption such as:

High Absorption/Bioactivity
Ascorbate
Citrate

Fumarate
Malate
Picolinate
Succinate
Tartrate

Now that you have checked the minerals, take a look at the vitamins. The easiest way to check on quality is to look at the B vitamins, specifically vitamins B2 and B6. In a high quality formula, riboflavin-vitamin B2 will be accompanied by its more expensive cousin riboflavin 5-phosphate. Similar holds true for pyridoxine hydrochloride-vitamin B6. A high quality formula will also contain its more expensive cousin pyridoxol 5-phosphate.

Finally, any multivitamin that contains iron, copper or iodine, is an inferior formula. These ingredients are oxidants, which can damage the vitamins/antioxidants contained in the pill.

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