

SMARTER SUPPLEMENT CONVERSATIONS

Episode 1 – A Recap: A Smarter Supplement Strategy

Thank you again for joining us for the Smarter Health Conversations 6-part series.

Instead of sending out a 50-minute video recording, which was not as structured as I would have liked it to be, I thought a clear, to-the-point summary—including a few things I didn't get time to cover—would be more useful.

Valuable questions were asked in the session and in the registration questionnaire; these guide each Q&A so you get the information you need to know.

The Q&A

1. Does everyone need to take supplements?

Not everyone needs or benefits from supplements. Marketing sells that impression. If you are eating a reasonable diet, you will be getting essential nutrients from your food.

If you feel healthy most of the time and don't get sick often, then supplements are often unnecessary.

2. When can nutrient supplementation become essential: Evidence-based cases

Nutrient supplementation can become essential—not just helpful—when daily stressors, medication use, environmental exposures, genetic factors, injury or with ageing or increase demand or reduce absorption beyond what diet alone can support.

Even in healthy individuals, correcting subclinical deficiencies can improve energy, cognition, and resilience to stress.

3. How do I know I am getting the right dose?

Most good-quality nutrient supplements are labelled with a recommended daily dose based on general population guidelines. These are typically safe and suitable for healthy adults—but they don't account for individual differences. **There isn't one-size-fits-all guidance. The right dose depends on several factors:**

- Your current health status
- Whether you are concerned about developing a health condition or managing one
- Age, weight, and gender
- Genetic variations that affect how you absorb or use specific nutrients
- Medication use that increases nutrient loss or interferes with absorption
- Underlying deficiencies confirmed through blood work or other symptoms

More is not always better—especially with fat-soluble vitamins (like A, D, E, and K), iron, or zinc, which can build up in the body. Overdosing can also disrupt the balance of other nutrients, especially minerals.

4. What is the difference between the active nutrient and its form?

When the front label or ingredient panel says “contains: magnesium citrate or bisglycinate,” it’s easy to assume that’s the nutrient itself. But it’s not.

- **The nutrient** is the **active part** your body actually needs—in this case, it is magnesium.
- **The form** is the **ingredient** provided in the supplement (preferably a combination of well-absorbed types, such as one or more of the following: magnesium bisglycinate, magnesium citrate, magnesium malate, and magnesium threonate).

The form matters because it determines whether the nutrient is absorbed from your gut into your bloodstream and—hopefully—into the body’s tissues, where it’s actually needed.

5. How do I choose a good quality supplement?

There are good big and small brands and a lot of in-between available.

My rule of thumb—a quality supplement should meet these criteria:

- Sold by a reputable large or small brand
- Product names and descriptions are clear, not misleading, and don’t make big claims. They use words like “helps,” “supports,” or “promotes” to describe the nutrient’s potential benefits.
- Label ingredients are clear and recognisable
- Does not contain multiple herbal, natural, or unrecognisable ingredients
- Delivers the right nutrients in the right form

Natural doesn’t equal safe

A natural supplement doesn’t equal safe; they need to be considered carefully, especially if they have medicine-like properties.

Looking at labels

Examples of good choices::

Magnesium

Complementary Medicine 1.34.12 - Multiple Substance Formulation - Health Supplement		
INGREDIENTS	Per Capsule	Per Dosage
magnesium (bisglycinate) ●	287 mg	574 mg
magnesium citrate ●	287 mg	574 mg
magnesium malate ●	287 mg	574 mg
Combined elemental Magnesium calculated	120 mg	240 mg
holocalciferol (Vitamin D3) [Ovine]	11.25 µg / 450 IU	22.5 µg / 900 IU
Inactives: Magnesium stearate and vegetable capsule shell		
This unregistered medicine has not been evaluated by the SAHPRA for its quality, safety or intended use. Health supplements are intended to complement health or supplement the diet		

Omega 3 fish Oil

Complementary Medicine D.34.6 Fats, Oils and Fatty Acids - Health Supplement		
SAHPRA NO 025863 NAPPI: 710138-001		
INGREDIENTS	Per Capsule	Per Dosage
Omega-3 fish oil providing: ●	1150 mg	2300 mg
EPA (Eicosapentaenoic Acid) ●	422 mg	844 mg
DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) ●	287 mg	574 mg
Other Omega-3 Fatty Acids	114 mg	228 mg
Inactives: Vitamin E (d-alpha-tocopherol) as antioxidant, gelatine (bovine) capsule shell		
This unregistered medicine has not been evaluated by the SAHPRA for its quality, safety or intended use. Health supplements are intended to complement health or supplement the diet		

Herbal

SUPPLEMENT FACTS	
Dosage size is 1 capsule.	
Each capsule contains: Crocus sativus L. (safron) ●●	30 mg
(stigmas, 3:1 extract standardised to contain 3.5 % Lepticosalides®)	

- These ingredients are all supported by scientific evidence.
- The labels are clear and easily understood.
- The “active / elemental nutrient” levels are stated.

Examples to avoid

Multi herbal combinations can be dangerous even at low doses. These herbs often interact with one-another including any potential medication you may be taking.

A 12 ingredient Supplement

Amount Per Tablet	
Curcumin root (Curcuma longa as a 64:1 extract providing 8160 mg DHE*)	127.5 mg
Moringa leaf (Moringa oleifera as a 10:1 extract providing 1000 mg DHE*)	100 mg
Alpha lipolic acid	65 mg
White kidney bean seed (Phaseolus vulgaris as a 28:1 extract providing 1428 mg DHE*)	51 mg
Lady's mantle (Alchemilla vulgaris)	45 mg
Olive leaf (Olea europaea as an extract standardised to 20% oleuropein)	37.5 mg
Cumin seed (Cuminum cyminum as a 4:1 extract providing 75 mg DHE*)	18.75 mg
Horsemint leaf (Mentha longifolia as a 4:1 extract providing 60 mg DHE*)	15 mg
Grains of paradise seed (Aframomum melegueta as a 10:1 extract providing 125 mg DHE*)	12.5 mg
Vitamin C (Ascorbic acid)	5.25 mg
Black pepper fruit (Piper nigrum as a 50:1 extract standardised to 95% piperine providing 250 mg DHE*)	5 mg
Chromium picolinate (providing 30 mcg of elemental chromium)	250 mcg

*DHE - Dried herb equivalent

A 9 Ingredient Multiherb Supplement

SUPPLEMENT FACTS		
SERVING: 2 CAPSULES (PER SERVING = P/S)		
SERVINGS PER CONTAINER: 30		
	P/S	%DV
Taurine	500 mg	*
Magnesium L-Threonate	300 mg	*
Magnesium Glycinate	300 mg	*
Ashwagandha	250 mg	*
Bacopa Monnieri Extract (30%)	150 mg	*
L-Theanine	150 mg	*
Gotu Kola Extract (4:1)	75 mg	*
Lithium Orotate (1mg Elemental)	30 mg	*
Melatonin	500 µg	*

*Daily Value not established

- The ingredient combinations are not supported by scientific evidence.
- Labels are often easily misunderstood.
- Not all “active / elemental nutrient” levels are clearly stated.

End Note

Yes, supplements can be effective.

There are good supplements, risky supplements, and a lot of in-between.

A smarter supplement strategy means using them:

- Wisely,
- When they meet a real need,
- In the right form,
- And at the right time.

— If there's no difference in how you feel, or no improvement in blood nutrient levels, it's time to reconsider.

— If a product makes big promises, sounds too good to be true, or is full of marketing buzzwords—it probably is.

Cara Rd