

## Sourcing matters as much as the supplement itself

The supplement industry is largely unregulated. A bottle that says "curcumin" can contain almost anything — or almost nothing. This guide is how to read a label well enough to spend your money on something that actually works.

**Read this first:** The most important supplement decision you make is whether to take one at all. Discuss every item below with your oncology team before you start. Some compounds — including some on this page — interact with chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapy, and surgery. The right answer is often "wait until after this cycle."

### ✓ Green flags — what to look for

- **Third-party testing:** USP Verified, NSF Certified, ConsumerLab, or Informed Choice on the label
- **The active compound named clearly:** "95% curcuminoids" not just "turmeric extract"
- **Dose per serving stated:** in milligrams, not just "proprietary blend"
- **Bioavailability enhancers:** piperine for curcumin, fat for D3, micellized formulations
- **Lot number and expiration date:** both clearly printed
- **cGMP manufacturing:** "Manufactured in a cGMP-certified facility"
- **Manufacturer with a real address:** phone number, website, customer service
- **Modest claims:** "supports immune function" — not "cures cancer"

### ✗ Red flags — what to avoid

- **"Proprietary blend"** with no individual doses listed
- **No third-party testing seal** (or only the manufacturer's own seal)
- **Cure claims:** "cures cancer," "kills tumor cells," "miracle"
- **MLM (multi-level marketing)** products sold through "consultants"
- **Celebrity endorsements** without trial data
- **Suspiciously cheap** compared to the standard market price
- **"Patented" formulas** without published research
- **No expiration date** or no lot number
- **Pressure tactics:** "limited time," "today only," "exclusive"

#### CERTIFICATION KEYS

##### USP Verified

United States Pharmacopeia. Tests potency, purity, and dissolution. Highest standard widely available for supplements.

##### NSF Certified

Independent testing for label accuracy and contaminants. NSF Certified for Sport adds testing for banned substances.

##### ConsumerLab

Independent lab that publishes test results. Look up their reports before buying any supplement.

##### Informed Choice

Tests for banned substances and contaminants. Common in athletic supplements.

## BY COMPOUND — WHAT TO LOOK FOR ON EACH LABEL

### **Curcumin (from turmeric)**

**Look for:** 95% curcuminoids minimum. Bioavailability enhancement is essential — choose a formulation with piperine (BioPerine®), phytosomes (Meriva®), liposomal delivery, or micellized form. Plain turmeric capsules without enhancement are largely wasted.

*Discuss with oncology: may interact with some chemotherapy agents. Often paused around treatment days.*

### **Vitamin D3 (cholecalciferol)**

**Look for:** D3 (cholecalciferol), not D2 (ergocalciferol — far less effective). Pair with K2 (MK-7 form) for proper calcium handling. Take with a fatty meal. Get your level tested first — supplement to a target, don't guess.

*Discuss with oncology: ask for a 25(OH)D blood test. Target range varies; many integrative oncologists aim for 50–80 ng/mL.*

### **Omega-3 (EPA + DHA)**

**Look for:** total EPA + DHA on the label (not just "fish oil"). Aim for at least 2g combined daily. Triglyceride form is better absorbed than ethyl ester. Third-party tested for heavy metals (mercury, PCBs, dioxins). Smell test: rancid fish oil should be discarded.

*Discuss with oncology: may have mild blood-thinning effect — relevant before surgery or with anticoagulants.*

### **Medicinal mushrooms**

**Look for:** "fruiting body extract" — not "mycelium on grain" (which is mostly grain filler). Beta-glucan content stated on label (the active immune-modulating compound). Hot water + alcohol dual extraction. Common species: turkey tail (PSK/PSP), reishi, maitake, lion's mane, cordyceps.

*Discuss with oncology: immune-modulating effects may interact with some immunotherapies. Confirm timing.*

### **Vitamin C, Zinc, and supportive supplements**

**Vitamin C:** oral high-dose is poorly absorbed; IV is a separate clinical conversation. **Zinc:** 15–30 mg daily for most adults; do not exceed 40 mg long-term without testing. **Magnesium:** glycinate or threonate forms for sleep and nervous system support. Always with food.

*Discuss with oncology: high-dose IV vitamin C is a separate decision that requires clinical supervision.*

**How We Source Our Supplements:** My mother, Ute, does not use any one brand exclusively, and the book does not endorse specific products — partly because formulations change, and partly because what is right for her may not be right for you. What she does do is verify every bottle against the green-flag list above, look up the manufacturer on ConsumerLab.com before buying, and bring every supplement to every appointment so the oncology team has the full picture. The bottle should never be a secret. — Sonja Galani

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**This guide does not endorse specific brands or replace clinical judgment.** Bring every supplement to every oncology appointment. Pause anything new before surgery. Stop anything that causes new symptoms and call your team. The book is the science; this is the buying guide. — From Part 5 (Chapters 22–25) and Appendix Section A of *Breathe & Bloom*.

*This tool is part of the **Breathe & Bloom Patient Companion Workbook**. Download the full 90-page workbook at [breatheandbloom.org](https://breatheandbloom.org)*