

Webinar 7 Handout:
UNDERSTANDING SUPPLEMENTS: PART III

Clients will come to you taking a host of different supplements. Below are some of the most commonly seen supplements, why your clients may be using them and the “real deal” about their efficacy.

Name of Supplement	Why Your Client May Be Using It	The Real Deal
Biotin	Biotin is touted as a beauty supplement for hair and nail growth and skin beautification.	Evidence shows biotin supplementation is good for treating biotin deficiency and possibly skin rashes in children. There is insufficient evidence for hair, skin or nail uses, but it is generally ok to try for a short term.
Black cohosh	Relief from symptoms associated with menopause.	Results are mixed on whether black cohosh effectively relieves menopausal symptoms.
Chondroitin	Used as a treatment for joint pain and arthritis, usually in combination with glucosamine.	The evidence shows that some people with osteoarthritis of the knee or hand can experience some benefit from taking chondroitin. However, pain relief is likely to be modest or possibly insignificant. It may take 4-8 weeks of supplementation until benefits are seen.
COQ10	Used for patients who have heart disease, are on statins or undergoing chemotherapy.	Clinical trials have shown that coenzyme Q10 helps protect the heart from the damaging side effects of doxorubicin, a drug used to treat cancer, and some studies have shown that it helps with heart failure symptoms. COQ10 is a precursor to ubiquinol, which is better to take than COQ10.
Coffee bean extract (Green coffee bean extract)	Used primarily as a weight loss supplement and also claims to lower blood pressure and blood sugar.	There are no long term studies to date. Initial research shows small results. It is not recommended for clients with cardiac risk factors.
Creatine	Used to boost exercise performance and increase muscle mass.	Creatine does not appear to improve performance in aerobic exercises, or benefit older people. Also, creatine does not

		conclusively increase endurance or improve performance in highly trained athletes. There is some evidence that creatine "loading," using 20 grams daily for 5 days, may be more effective than continuous use for athletic performance.
Cranberry	Used primarily for treating urinary tract problems.	Research shows that drinking cranberry juice cocktail (or taking capsules in some studies) can help prevent repeated UTIs in older and pregnant women.
Echinacea	Widely used to fight infections, especially the common cold, and other upper respiratory infections.	Many scientific studies show that taking some echinacea products when cold symptoms first appear can modestly reduce symptoms of the common cold in adults. But other scientific studies show no benefit. It is not likely to prevent colds.
Evening primrose oil	Used most commonly for skin disorders such as eczema, psoriasis, and acne. Also can be used for arthritis, breast pain, menopause, PMS, cancer, and diabetes.	There is not enough evidence to support the use of evening primrose oil for any health condition, and is not helpful for relieving symptoms of eczema, menopause, or PMS.
Garcinia cambogia	When taken with meals, it acts as an appetite suppressant.	There is not enough evidence to support the use of this supplement and there are a lot of "fakes" out there. HCA is the ingredient touted for the appetite suppressing benefits.
Ginkgo biloba	Often used for memory disorders including Alzheimer's disease.	Some studies show that ginkgo biloba modestly improves symptoms of Alzheimer's, vascular, or mixed dementias but results are mixed as many studies show no benefit. Ginkgo might modestly improve memory and speed of mental processing in people without memory loss.
Glucosamine sulfate	Used as a treatment for joint pain and arthritis, usually in combination with chondroitin.	Some research suggests that glucosamine reduces the pain of osteoarthritis in the knee as effectively as other common medications, but can take 4-8 weeks to work.

Goldenseal	Used to treat colds and other respiratory tract infections.	Few studies have been published on goldenseal's safety and effectiveness, and there is little scientific evidence to support using it for any health problem.
Hoodia	Used as an appetite suppressant for weight loss.	There is no reliable scientific evidence to support hoodia's use. No studies of the herb in people have been published.
Kava	Used to calm anxiety, stress, and restlessness, and treat sleep problems (insomnia).	Many cases of liver damage and even some deaths have been traced to kava use. As a result, kava has been banned from many countries (not the US). The majority of evidence shows kava can lower anxiety and might work as effectively as prescription anti-anxiety medications. Insufficient evidence exists regarding its efficacy on sleep and stress.
Carnitine/ L-carnitine	Used to "burn" body fat into energy.	Twenty years of research finds no consistent evidence that carnitine supplements can improve exercise or physical performance in healthy subjects.
Melatonin	Used as a sleep aid or for jet lag.	Melatonin seems to be able to shorten the amount of time it takes to fall asleep, by about 12 minutes, but does not appear to have an effect on the amount of time a person sleeps.
Raspberry ketones	Used as a fat burner for weight loss.	Currently there are no human studies on the effects of raspberry ketones.
Resveratrol	Antioxidant used to combat oxidation of cells in the body, and is linked to heart health.	Most research on resveratrol has been done on animals. Research in mice given resveratrol suggests that the antioxidant might help protect them from obesity and diabetes, both of which are strong risk factors for heart disease. There are no human studies on resveratrol to date.
St. John's wort	Commonly used for depression, anxiety, tiredness, loss of appetite and trouble sleeping.	Although some studies of St. John's wort have reported benefits for depression, others have not.
Valerian	Used for sleep disorders and anxiety, as well as headaches,	Research suggests that valerian may be helpful for insomnia, but there is not enough evidence

	depression, irregular heartbeat, and trembling.	to confirm this. There is inconclusive evidence whether it works for other conditions, such as anxiety or depression.
Yohimbe	Used as an aphrodisiac or remedy for sexual dysfunction, including erectile dysfunction in men.	There is evidence that the active ingredient, yohimbine, can be helpful for ED. Some herbalists suggest that the yohimbe bark actually works better than the yohimbine ingredient alone. However, so far yohimbe bark has not been evaluated in research studies.
Zinc	Used for boosting the immune system, treating the common cold and recurrent ear infections, and preventing lower respiratory infections.	Possibly effective for decreasing the length of time the common cold lasts, when taken by mouth as a lozenge.
5-HTP	Used for sleep disorders, depression, anxiety, migraine, and binge eating associated with obesity.	Don't use 5-HTP until more is known. 5-HTP might be unsafe. There is some evidence that 5-HTP might be about as effective as some prescription drugs for depression. Taking 5-HTP doesn't seem to reduce pain or the number of headaches.

The supplement industry is a billion dollar industry for good reason. Many of us are looking for a magic bullet to solve our ailments. This sheet is a “bottom line” summary that should be used as a reference point. While many supplements are deemed benign, others may actually be damaging. Remind your clients that all of these supplements should be tried for short periods and then followed by no supplementation, unless prescribed otherwise by a physician. Also keep in mind that many of these supplements can interact with different nutrients or medications, so make sure you know exactly what your client is taking before making any recommendations. Use NIH and Medscape searches for the best and most up to date information.