

The Vitality Digest: 10 Supplements Ranked by Evidence

A research guide from The Vitality Digest editorial team

Introduction

Every year, thousands of supplements hit the market with bold claims — but only a fraction have meaningful research behind them. This guide distills the evidence on 10 of the most commonly discussed supplements, ranked by strength of research support and real-world use.

Nothing here is medical advice. Think of this as a starting map, not a prescription. Always work with a qualified healthcare professional before starting any supplement program.

1. Magnesium Glycinate — Sleep, Muscle & Stress Support

What the research suggests: Magnesium is involved in over 300 enzymatic processes. Deficiency is associated with poor sleep, muscle cramps, and elevated stress hormones. Glycinate is the chelated form with the best absorption and fewest gastrointestinal side effects.

Commonly studied doses: 200–400 mg elemental magnesium taken 30–60 minutes before bed.

What to look for: "Magnesium glycinate" or "magnesium bisglycinate" on the label — not magnesium oxide, which has poor bioavailability.

2. Omega-3 Fatty Acids — Cardiovascular & Cognitive

What the research suggests: Long-chain omega-3s (EPA and DHA) are among the most studied supplements in human health. Research links them to support for triglyceride levels, brain function, and inflammatory pathways. The evidence base is decades deep.

Commonly studied doses: 1–3 grams of combined EPA+DHA daily. Higher doses sometimes studied for cardiovascular support.

What to look for: Third-party tested fish oil (or algae-based for plant-based diets). Check EPA+DHA content, not just total fish oil milligrams.

3. Vitamin D3 + K2 — Bone, Immune & Metabolic Health

What the research suggests: Vitamin D insufficiency affects an estimated 40% of adults in North America. Research associates adequate levels with immune function, mood regulation, calcium metabolism, and metabolic health. K2 helps direct calcium to bones rather than soft tissue.

Commonly studied doses: 1,000–5,000 IU D3 daily depending on baseline levels. Test serum 25-OH-D before megadosing.

What to look for: D3 (cholecalciferol) — not D2. K2 as MK-7 form for longer half-life.

4. Ashwagandha (KSM-66) — Stress Resilience & Cortisol

What the research suggests: Ashwagandha is an adaptogenic root with a meaningful body of randomized controlled trial evidence. Studies suggest it may support the body's response to stress, help maintain healthy cortisol rhythms, and support sleep onset in stressed populations.

Commonly studied doses: 300–600 mg of root extract (standardized to withanolides) daily.

What to look for: KSM-66 or Sensoril are patented standardized extracts with the most clinical research.

5. Creatine Monohydrate — Muscle, Strength & Brain Energy

What the research suggests: Creatine is one of the most extensively studied sports supplements with a remarkably safe profile. Research supports its role in short-burst energy production (ATP resynthesis), muscle performance, and increasingly, neuroprotection and cognitive energy metabolism.

Commonly studied doses: 3–5 g daily. No loading phase needed; consistent daily use is what matters.

What to look for: Creatine monohydrate — the original form is still the best studied. Creapure is a purity-certified brand.

6. Berberine — Blood Sugar & Metabolic Metabolism

What the research suggests: Berberine activates AMPK, a cellular energy-sensing pathway. Research in human trials suggests it may support healthy blood glucose metabolism, lipid profiles, and weight management in metabolically challenged populations.

Commonly studied doses: 500 mg taken 2–3 times daily with meals (to minimize GI effects).

What to look for: Berberine HCl. Dihydroberberine is a newer form with improved absorption — worth considering if standard berberine causes GI discomfort.

7. Lion's Mane Mushroom — Cognitive Support & NGF

What the research suggests: Lion's Mane contains hericenones and erinacines, compounds studied for their potential to stimulate Nerve Growth Factor (NGF). Early human trials suggest benefit for mild cognitive impairment and mood in some populations. Research is newer but promising.

Commonly studied doses: 500–1,000 mg of extract (standardized to beta-glucans) daily.

What to look for: Full-spectrum fruiting body extract — not mycelium on grain, which dilutes active compounds.

8. Coenzyme Q10 (Ubiquinol) — Cellular Energy & Heart

What the research suggests: CoQ10 is produced naturally but declines with age and statin use. Research suggests supplementation may support mitochondrial energy production, cardiovascular function, and reduce oxidative stress markers.

Commonly studied doses: 100–300 mg daily. Ubiquinol (the reduced form) is preferred for absorption over age 40.

What to look for: Ubiquinol form for people over 40; standard ubiquinone works well for younger adults.

9. Probiotics (Multi-Strain) — Gut, Immune & Mood

What the research suggests: The gut microbiome is increasingly linked to immune regulation, mood via the gut-brain axis, nutrient absorption, and metabolic health. Research supports multi-strain formulas that include both *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* species for general wellness.

Commonly studied doses: 10–50 billion CFU daily. Strain diversity often matters more than raw CFU count.

What to look for: Third-party tested for CFU count at expiration (not at manufacture). Shelf-stable formulas for convenience.

10. Collagen Peptides — Skin, Joints & Connective Tissue

What the research suggests: Hydrolyzed collagen peptides provide glycine, proline, and hydroxyproline — amino acids that support connective tissue repair. Research suggests benefits for skin elasticity, joint comfort, and bone mineral density in populations with active lifestyles or age-related changes.

Commonly studied doses: 10–15 g daily. Mix in morning coffee or a smoothie.

What to look for: Hydrolyzed (not native) collagen for absorption. Type I+III for skin and bone; Type II for joints.

Putting It Together

No supplement replaces a whole-food diet, consistent sleep, and regular movement — but the right ones, taken thoughtfully, can fill real gaps.

Start with the 2–3 that address your most pressing health goals. Give each a minimum 8-week trial before evaluating. Log your experience.

And remember: more is not better. The supplements with the strongest research profiles often have simple, modest doses that have been studied consistently over years.

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