

Your favorite health food store has plenty of supplements. But trying to figure out which nutrient is the best—decoding them—can be tricky. Here is a codebook for three widely used and important supplemental ingredients.

VITAMIN:

## Folate

**WHERE IT COMES FROM:**

Food sources include spinach, eggs, beans, peas, seafood, liver, whole grains, and nuts.

**MAIN USES:**

Folate is primarily known for preventing neural tube defects in children and is an essential nutrient for women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

Folate also works in tandem with vitamins B6 and B12 for healthy neural and nerve cell communication, proper blood pressure and homocysteine levels, and overall daily energy.

**WHAT IT IS:**

Folate is a member of the family of B vitamins and is sometime referred to as vitamin B9.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:**

As a supplement, L-methylfolate is more easily utilized by the body since it is already in form the body uses, yet folic acid is the form most commonly included in supplements. Unfortunately, folic acid is often poorly converted into folate by the body. Additionally, there is evidence that high dosages of folic acid, but not L-methylfolate, may mask B12 deficiencies, interact poorly with medications, and cause some of the same health issues as having too little folate.

**TYPICAL DOSAGE:**

For healthy men and women, do not exceed 400 mcg per day. Pregnant or lactating women should not exceed 800 mcg daily.

BOTANICAL:

## Oregano

**WHAT IT IS:**

Oregano is the common name of a few related plants that have similar culinary and medicinal properties.

**WHERE IT COMES FROM:**

Various species of oregano are found throughout the Mediterranean region. Like many herbs, it has a history as both a food and medicine.



**MAIN USES:**

In Morocco, the herb has been used for generations because of its healing properties.

A variety of oregano species, including *Oregano compactum*, contain carvacrol and thymol—compounds studied for their antimicrobial power, even against drug-resistant bacteria that cause staph infections or E. coli outbreaks.

The herb has also shown antiviral activity against norovirus, helps to balance probiotic levels, clears sinuses and upper respiratory airways, and shows potent, protective antioxidant actions.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:**

Oregano is powerful on its own or in combination with other botanical oils. Some oil forms can be 100 times more concentrated than dry plant extracts, so even a small dosage can deliver a strong impact. Ideally, an oregano oil made of the aboveground parts of the plant should be standardized for carvacrol and thymol content.

**TYPICAL DOSAGE:**

150 mg as a stand-alone herb, or 25 mg when combined with concentrated cinnamon, thyme, and clove oils.

MINERAL:

## Manganese

**WHAT IT IS:**

Manganese is an essential mineral for the proper functioning of cells throughout the body.

**WHERE IT COMES FROM:**

Food sources include beans, oysters, nuts, pumpkin seeds, leafy green vegetables, tea, coffee, clams, and whole grains.



**MAIN USES:**

Manganese is a major component of ligaments and tendons, and it helps strengthen joint structure and flexibility. Supplemental manganese may help prevent developing type 2 diabetes. Clinical research found that individuals with the highest intakes of the mineral had a 30 percent lower risk of developing the disease.

**WHAT TO LOOK FOR:**

Chelated forms that bind manganese to the amino acid glycinate, which boosts absorption of the mineral through the intestinal wall and into the bloodstream.

**TYPICAL DOSAGE:**

1.8 to 2.3 mg daily, 2.0 to 2.6 mg during pregnancy or lactation.

