Not All Supplements Are Created Equal: What ‘Medical Grade’ Really Means Transcript

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Show Intro and Guest Introduction

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It could stay in the body and pose some health risks that way. So again, when we start stacking on multiple products, there could be overlap with ingredients.

And then lastly, again if you're not choosing a high quality standard product, we might be exposing ourselves to additional contaminants, heavy metals or harmful substances that we don't even realize.

Welcome to Beyond the Scale, where real health gets deeper than just the numbers. I'm Dr. Darren Dubiak. And I am Alexandra Dubyak, and we are not only partners in life, but also passionate partners and integrative care.

Blending faith, family, functional wellness, And a little life with our dogs. Because true healing happens beyond the scale. Hello, everyone. How are you?

Welcome to Beyond the Scale. Today, I have a very, very awesome guest and someone I'm very excited to have, Miss Christy Bell-Olympic. So, Christi, thanks for joining me.

You're welcome. Thanks for having me! Absolutely. So I want to give you guys a little background on Christie. She's a very accomplished registered dietitian with over 20 years of experience in the clinical nutrition world, education, and dietary supplement research and a lot of R&D, Christie, is that correct?

Yes. So there's not a better expert to me than you about supplements in this country right now. And what's out there? What's the new things out and what really separates medical grade versus things that are over the counter, right?

One of the reasons I love having Christie on the show and not only just having her on this show, but being friends with her for years is that she has such a passion about empowering individuals to achieve optimal health.

And she is a, I think you are, you're a certified expert in supplementation. So again, thanks for coming on on The Show Today Beyond The Scale. Christie, want to get right into it.

All right. Supplements, vitamins, there's a lot to talk about because you have some of these studies coming out. They'll be on mainstream news. Oh, you know, this supplement that people have been taking, it really doesn't work.

We've shown and I'm like, I don't know about that. And then there are other supplements. There are the next greatest thing, right? And we'll talk. About some.

Of those things.

Medical-Grade vs Over-the-Counter Supplements

but the number one thing of why i had you on this show is because i really want you to explain to the public what is the difference between having supplements that are quote-unquote medical grade things like myself i'm a

practitioner i have a medical license where i am able to give people supplements versus people going to big box stores or buying them online.

So Christy, take it away. The number one question right off the bat, what's the difference, please? Yeah, well, I am definitely one to be able to answer that being that I worked at a professional supplement company for 15 years.

I have all the inside scoop, so I'm not just saying this or hearing it. And I can affirm and say that not all supplements are created equal. So the top thing that comes to my mind when I think of professional or medical grade supplements is the high quality control standards that are in place.

So these companies, again, are going and doing more rigorous testing. They go kind of above and beyond the basics or general requirements. Checking for identity.

Do I actually have what's in the bottle? You know, checking for purity. You know, heavy metals, is there any contaminations and even pesticides for some ingredients?

So it goes above and beyond the basics that you might find in some low cost over the counter products. There's a little bit more and we're going to get into more detail, but there's even just like better forms of ingredients, ingredients that are going absorb better into the body and be utilized better than other ingredients.

And then again, even just full disclosure, like are there allergens in this product? Are we disclosing that it's allergen-free? Is there milk, for example?

Non-GMO verification is a thing. You know, now people wanna know if there's genetically modified ingredients and are we actually testing and checking for that?

are their clean natural ingredients in my product. And lastly, the most important thing is, is this products going to work? is it efficacious? So these professional-grade products are usually backed by science.

We look at clinical dosing, we look the research. Are we putting the right amounts of ingredients in the product to be sure it's efficacious? So those are some of the top reasons why.

Let me ask you a question, Christy. So, again, even medical grade supplements, no supplements in the United States are approved or warranted by the FDA, is that correct?

And all your supplement bottles have that nomenclature on the bottom, correct. Correct, I mean it's true. Supplements aren't FDA approved. I will say though that supplement companies are FDA regulated in terms of the manufacturing.

So again, if you hear about GMP certified supplements, that's good manufacturing practices. That is a requirement FDA does put out for manufacturing companies to abide by and follow.

An FDA can drop into a manufacturing facility at any time and do audits. But again, they aren't testing every product. They're not checking if every project has what's in the bottle.

they're just looking at more of the manufacturing standards. Gotcha. So and that's what I want to explain to people. Even our supplements, I'll grab one of ours, right?

Um, and it will always say, you know, not, I mean, let me pull this up here. Cause it's on more or less on every single label that people talk about, again, non-regulated controlled yada, yata, by the FDA.

And people say well, well that's the, is that every supplement that answer is yes. But I love what you just said with these medical grade companies, products that, we get something from our GI ultra product from.

Do those companies themselves take upon them to do all the testing, Christie? Yeah, so it is up to the individual

companies to do the right kinds of testing.

Again, you can get by with very basic testing, or you could go, like I said earlier, above and beyond and actually test for certain, what we call analytes, but it's basically testing to see is there really the amount of vitamin D in here?

Is there actually this herbal ingredient in there? And checking identity of the actual ingredient that's being sourced. So again, professional grade supplements are going above and beyond and doing more rigorous testing.

Some of the things that I see, especially from our supplements, right? So let's use vitamin C for an example, because people will come into that, well, I'm on vitamin c already.

And well I am on a thousand milligrams, and let us say my product is a 1000 milligrams. But tell people what they really should be looking at with that vitamin C, right?

What type, what's it broken down to? And a lot of times that happens with our magnesium and calcium products, you know that, Right? You know, is it calcium citrate?

Is it malate? is a carbonate like what is that? I mean, are some of these things over the counter cheaper forms and explain that to me, please. Yeah, a lot of times the price reflects the quality and type of ingredient being used.

So for example, to answer your question on vitamin C, yes, there's straight, basic ascorbic acid that you can take, but at a thousand milligrams you might have a lot of GI side effects from that.

Ingredient Quality, Forms, and Bioavailability

But there's better forms out there called, you know, ascorbates and different types of, again, vitamin C's that will buffer the stomach and not cause stomach upset or GI Side effects.

And a lotta times, professional companies go above and beyond and source some of those to have better effects on the body. There's lots of other examples.

Magnesium is a nice one, magnesium glycinate, a more preferred form for absorption versus like a magnesium oxide that may not really absorb fully and you may be getting the full effects from your supplement.

You know, as a registered dietitian, what do you think one of the biggest health risks that you see people just going online and just buying things because they read about them.

I mean, do think it's safe for these people to do those things? I have some patients, Kristi, and you know this, being in practice for years too, people will come in and they'll literally have a menu of supplements they take every day.

I mean, some of these things, 15 to 20 some products they take it individually daily, but they read that it was good for them or they heard someone talk about it.

So they go buy it, right? You know, what do you think that's another big risk for people taking supplements? That are unregulated, I should say. It can be.

Yeah, it can certainly be a risk, especially for patients that are already on medications. We know that, again, supplements, there are medication interactions that again someone may not be aware of.

So if they're taking certain supplements maybe their medications aren't even working properly because there's some interactions or interference with how the medication is being processed.

For example, like if you're taking 5-HTP, it can interfere with like an antidepressant, for example. But there's, you know, there are other concerns outside of medications.

You know again, the correct dosing, maybe you are taking too high of a dose or maybe again you aren't taking enough. It's not even working and you basically wasting your money because you just not been getting to see efficacious results.

The other concern is when people have again a big stack of different products and trying and adding on different things is again, stacking can be a problem.

So for example, if you're getting vitamin D, which is a fat soluble vitamin, but you are getting it in multiple products, you don't even know how much total you really consuming.

It could stay in the body and pose some health risks that way. So again, when we start stacking on multiple products, there could be overlap with ingredients.

And then lastly, again if you're not choosing a high quality standard product, we might be exposing ourselves to additional contaminants, heavy metals or harmful substances that we don't even realize.

Gotcha. So, you know, so let's go back to that again. I really want to emphasize this medical grade supplement, and I use the B word a lot, which is bioavailable, right?

And I used that as almost like an analogy, talking about different types of steaks, or meats. There's choice, there's prime and everything is, different or broken down differently.

And I try to explain to patients, that's more or less how supplements are. But I really, really want to drive home the fact of what a medical grade supplement is, why they're also probably more expensive at a doctor's office, right?

So I'll let you take the reins on that one. So bioavailable is just another term to say that's just how your body is utilizing that ingredient. Is it really using it to its advantage or not?

And so there are different types of ingredients that we, again, we call more bio-available. They enhance better, they get into the system better than other forms.

And yes, those forms are generally more expensive, so it might Again, play into the cost of a medical grade supplement, but we know by testing and research these ingredients are they're getting into the bloodstream.

We can see them in the tissues and we know that that's a better form. So a great example might be curcumin. Curcumen is hard to absorb, just taking straight curicumin, but when we enhance it with a phospholipid or we make it a liposomal, it absorbs much better in a body and have studies to prove that.

Another ingredient I love to talk about, I'm sure you do too, Dr. Dubiak, is folate. Methyltetahydrofolate is an easier way to say that. But again, some people have a genetic mutation they can't properly turn folic acid into folate and use it in the body.

So again, when we go straight to the better, more bioavailable form of methylfolate, our bodies can utilize it right away and not have any concerns. Again, a lot of these professional grade supplements, companies I should say, are using those better forms to ensure that people are utilizing their supplements.

Now, I agree, and you're right, because so that MTHFR gene became a very sexy word, right? The past how many years? And I don't think people realize just first off, not knowing what the word methylation means, Right?

and why methylated B12 or cyanocobalamin versus methylcobalin means so much. And just like you said, with tolic acid, and are women trying to become pregnant and women who are pregnant, and they're prenatal.

So, I mean, again, tell people a little bit why it's so important that folate needs to be methylated when you're pregnant. Yeah. Foliate particularly helps with fetal development.

Risks of Stacking Supplements and Contaminants

If we're not having enough of the right kind of foliate, or for example, if we use taking folic acid, but our bodies aren't turning it into the correct form offolate in the body, then yeah, that could pose definitely a risk for the fetus.

So number one, if we can find out if you have the genetic SNP and do some genetic testing, that's the best, of course, but without even having to go to that length, just going straight and using a supplement that has methylfolate in it already is just a nice insured way to know that we're utilizing the folate.

I love it, Christy. So I want to take a 10,000 foot view, but I wanna get a little closer on a couple products because I think they need some attention.

And the number one product I that needs attention is fish oil, right? There is confusion on, should I take product that has higher EPA than DHA? How many grams should I take a day?

If I'm on a blood center, should i even take it? And again, I know where you're not diagnosing or giving anyone treatment advice in this podcast, but I would just like to pick your brain and to hear your thoughts on even just harvesting.

I mean, I now know that there are companies, medical grade companies who have fishing boats, right, who are fishing at night just because of how sunlight may alter the oil itself when it's harvested.

So again, if you could elaborate a little bit, that would be helpful. Yeah, so fish oil is one of those things. Again, we know that certain kinds of fish have more heavy metal levels in them.

So, number one, you want to be sourcing the right fish oils from the parts of the ocean that have low contamination, but also the types of sources. small fish, anchovies, sardines, mackerel, those types of things, again, are better sources.

So that's number one. But number two are the sustainable fishing methods and how, like you said, how they produce the oils. Low oxidation, all of that makes sense.

When you're going with, a professional grade supplement, we know that we're sourcing from these high quality reputable fish oil manufacturers and we trust their quality based on the testing to show low levels of oxidation and low-levels of mercury and other heavy metals.

So again, it's just another way to ensure you're having a low contaminated, high-quality fish also. Gotcha. And thank you for that. The other item, again, another one of the hottest supplements as we know is vitamin D, right?

You know, should I take vitamin d3? Do I need it with K? What is your perfect scenario for a vitamin-D supplement? Oh, yeah, that's a good question. I think, again, I'm not here to prescribe, but in general, we all need a pretty decent amount of vitamin D on a daily maintenance dose, probably a couple thousand IUs, just based on, where we live and how much sun exposure we have.

But vitamin D is hard to absorb. It is considered fat soluble, so you need some healthy fat in there to help it absorb again. You can buy supplements and products that might have some in their to helps absorption or just to be sure you're taking it with the right kinds of foods for absorption.

But you know, again, it depends on the amount that you are taking. If you taking a high dose, maybe 5,000, 10,00 I use a day, you might probably will benefit from taking vitamin K with it because vitamin k will just help ensure that vitamin D gets into the bone and is utilized properly.

But if you're taking a low maintenance dose, it doesn't necessarily require vitamin case. So again, this is where professional guidance would come in and really help you make the best decision on which vitamin d to take or how much to Right.

And I like how you said we're not on here to prescribe or diagnose anybody. But, you know, patients at Body By Aim, and Christie knows this, every single patient, we check your vitamin D once every four to six months.

So, again, I think it's a danger, Christie, because so many people are out there just buying these things online, like you've said. Oh, well, vitamin is good for me.

I live in the Northeast during the winter, so I should take a double the dose so that I don't get sick.

Fish Oil and Vitamin D Guidance

And I don't think people realize the harm that they could put themselves in without getting tested. Agreed? Yeah, so like I was saying earlier, some of these vitamins are called fat soluble.

So they end up staying in the body. They don' clear out of the bod.y They can accumulate in your tissues, they can affect your liver or your organs if you're taking too much.

And that does potentially cause the toxicity level. It depends on the ingredient, but yes, there are some risks with certain vitamins. So we talk about certain supplements and I know there's some hot ones out there right now.

Right. What's the end thing? What do you think that in 2026 and going in the 2027, what do think some of the, I don't know, give me one or two supplements that you'd think, that some people, again, you're not prescribing or diagnosing, but what are some, two hot supplements the people should at least be reading about?

I should say that, ask you that. I would start with creatine. I think we've been all probably hearing and seeing a lot about creatines. It's really becoming popular because there's been new research showing that there are some cognitive and memory benefits associated with it.

Its particularly can be helpful for women as well, not just men in the bodybuilding arena. But also with the big craze of taking GLP-1 medications, we know that GLPs can lower your natural muscle mass.

So again, creatine can be another supportive product to help you maintain muscle-mass while going through GLp-2. While it may not be indicated for everybody, there are a lot of good benefits to start looking into creatinine.

And then the other one that comes to mind would be NAD. NED is a special, you know, type of antioxidant that really is the powerful antioxidants that supports cellular energy.

So much of us these days with all what I call oxidative stress, which is basically stressors from our environment, from food, really just killing off ourselves and we're just not aging properly.

So going to powerful anti-aging ingredients to keep ourselves healthy, such as NAD and some other powerful antioxidant ingredients, again, pretty hot and popular and I think are very beneficial.

I agree. And you know, you hit on two very hot ones. Body by Aim has the Aim Create product and our Mito N. A. D. and, I, think the way 2026 and 2027 are going from a supplement standpoint, from what I see is very regenerative.

and longevity, right? A lot of people I'm seeing now are being very proactive, Christie, in their health. You hit the nail on the head. I mean, we have a very large practice where people were on GLPs and you don't want that catabolic state of breaking down muscle.

So we mandate even collagen peptides and we could talk about that a little bit and then creatine, but it's so imperative that just to take a regular good multi-daily as well, But it's really remarkable that it is a great way, finally, that people are saying, hey, I really need to be proactive.

And I think a lot of social media, you know, we're seeing some of these, let's say stars, right, on social medias in

their 40s or 50s and 60s, and if they look fantastic, people want to know how I could look like that and what are those people doing.

I mean, of course there's negatives and then everything. But I really, really agree with you on those two products. Another product I want you to talk about because you know it's my favorite product is berberine.

I take berberein for multiple things because it has a metabolic help for triglycerides and cholesterol. It's wonderful for the gut. And again, it is not for everybody.

But for me, It is my favourite thing. So I love taking berberine because it's something that has helped my cholesterol, especially my triglycerides and triglyceremia, really decrease, right?

And then I'm giving it to some of our gut patients with incredible results. You know that? We also have that very power-packed product that we became very popular with called GI altar.

It's actually one of the products I brought here that has five grams of glutamine, zinc, harnessing, like so much slippery. I'm like, so many beneficial things.

So it's leading me to one our last two questions. You know, I have people that will come into the office and they'll say, well, i take glutamine or I take ashwagandha to relax.

Creatine, NAD, and Emerging Supplement Trends

I want people to understand coming from an expert like yourself, why it's so important to have a synergistic effect of multiple products in one supplement, please.

Yeah, so products that use multiple effective clinical dose ingredients. Again, we're talking about a dose that's actually going to work and not just what I call fairy dust where you're putting a pinch of something in.

Well, this product is ashwagandha, but how much does it really have, you know, right? But again, these are supplements through practitioners such as yourself that we do trust there's enough in there.

But yes, especially when we're looking at herbal adaptogens, such is the berberine or the ashvagon or rhodiola or different types of again herbal plant-based adaptogen, they do have a synergistic way of working in the body to address multiple areas, whether it's again adrenal function or metabolic function.

So again, with these professional-grade medical- grade supplements, we try to address multiple areas with multiple ingredients that do have, like you said, synergistic effect together.

It's not always just one single ingredient. So there is some benefit of multiple. And I'm glad you said that, because I am trying to think from a patient standpoint what I've asked a lot.

It's, well, Dr. Dubek, I already on ashwagandha to relax, or I really take L-theanine. Or I take arginine, right? But I don't think people realize, there's citrulline that makes this.

And people don' understand the whole compounding effect. Just like how you mentioned earlier about 5-HTP. When it's dosed the right way, it is a wonderful, wonderful supplement, But what else can it be synergistically used for?

I know there's a lot of research out there now with vitamin C and black pepper, right? Being absorbed even better with some of those products together.

I have one last question, maybe two, but before we end today, what is a big highlight that you can have everyone understand? This is what medical grade is.

This what people buy online. You're driving down the street at your local shopping mart and just saying, hey, are people really wasting their money on those things at the grocery stores and big box stores?

In your opinion and again, this is your. Yeah, my opinion is it really depends what you're buying. I mean, I can't say sit here and definitely say that all over the counter retail products are bad by any means and I.

Can't sit and say all brands are created equally because they're not I would really advise you as a consumer to do your research. Research the quality and testing standards of the brands that you're purchasing.

Maybe look on their website. If it's not listed on the bottle, for example, some bottles over the counter might have like a USP verification of testing, third-party testing or they might haven't NSF logo meaning they were tested their party.

if they don't, yeah, go and research. Find out like what you are buying, maybe ask the company for a certificate of analysis to see what they're testing.

Synergistic Formulas and Choosing Safe Products

So you're not wasting your money just taking a bunch of stuff you don't know if they really need it are these really working is this what your body needs it's better to get professional guidance do testing as much as possible you know again testing.

what were testing for vitamin deficiencies testing your jeans testing you got my bio like what do you really need and finding a personal regimen. That is specific to you and when she started supplement regimens you can like you said earlier retest it three months later are my levels improving is my triglycerides going down you know am i seeing an improvement in my symptoms.

rather than just blindly taking a bunch of things and hoping it's going to work. It's better to just go the professional guidance route and buy safe and effective products.

No, I agree. And you know, to end it, you said it perfectly, it's be cautious on what you're buying, right? Do you even need it? Because as you guys will always hear me say, body buying testing, testing testing.

I'm the biggest dad and nerd anymore from gene testing to nutrient absorption, like Christy was saying in blood work, because It's wasting money, I think, that we do because, oh, i think I should take that because X, Y, and Z takes it, right?

You know, make it custom to you, Make it work. But at the end of the day, makes sure you're buying something healthy, safe, And right for you. So I thank you Kristi.

You're welcome. Thanks so much. So guys, again, I hope everyone got a lot of great information today. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

Thank you again Christy. Again, over 20 years in the supplement world and not only the knowledge that this young lady has, but the thousands of patients that she has seen, and also the research and the development of certain products She is a huge pillar in our industry and I can't thank you enough for having you on the show.

You're welcome. Again, thank so much and we'll talk to you guys soon. Okay, take care. Thanks for spending time with us on Beyond the Scale. If today's episode helped you see your health differently.

Like the Show, share it. And we will see you next time on beyond the scale.