Making Sense of Your Supplements

A short guide for when you're no longer sure what's helping, what needs reviewing, or where to start

Jo Saxton

Before you start

A quick word before we begin

If you've read my article about the two tins of supplements*, you may have found yourself thinking about your own cupboard.

Perhaps you know what everything is for. Or perhaps, like us, things have gradually built up and you're no longer quite sure what's helping, why you started some of it, or what needs another look.

This guide will help you list what you're taking, look more closely at up to three supplements and note any questions you may want to ask next. It won't tell you what to take or ask you to throw anything away.

If you're short on energy, just make the list today. You can come back to the rest another time.

Please read:

This guide is for reflection and organisation only. It is not medical advice.

Before starting, stopping or changing a supplement – or if you're unsure how it may interact with medication, other supplements or a health condition – speak to a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional who can look at your full situation. Do not stop prescribed medication without medical advice.

** You can read my article here: https://josaxtonhealth.com/2026/08/03/more-supplements*

What are you taking?

Let's get everything in one place

Start with the supplements you're currently taking. You don't need to make a perfect record or start hunting for old receipts. Just write down what you know.

A rough monthly cost is fine. If you have no idea, leave it blank for now.

Supplement	How much/ how often?	Monthly cost	Do I know why I take it?	Do I feel it's helping?
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure

(continued...)

Supplement	How much/ how often?	Monthly cost	Do I know why I take it?	Do I feel it's helping?
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure
			Yes/No/Not sure	Yes/No/Not sure

My rough monthly total: £ .....

If your list is long, please don't feel you have to look at every supplement in detail today.

Look for anything where you've answered '**No**' or '**Not sure**' in either of the last two columns. If there are lots, choose **no more than three** to look at first.

Choose where to begin

A closer look

There were a couple of supplements on our kitchen table I couldn't even remember buying. But there were some that instantly reminded me why we'd bought them and how hopeful we'd felt that they'd help.

Have another look at your list.

You may have spotted something and realised you're no longer quite sure why you're taking it. Or you may know exactly why you started it, but realise you're not sure whether it has made any difference.

Choose no more than three supplements that you'd most like to understand a bit better. The next three pages give you space to look at each one.

I've written the questions as though these are your supplements, but they work just as well if you're doing this for someone you care for.

You don't have to work through all three today.

Supplement 1:

What made me decide to try this, and what was I hoping it might help with?

(*It may have been suggested by a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional. You may have read about it in a Facebook group, heard it on a podcast, or had it recommended by a friend. Perhaps you found it yourself after hours of researching. Just write down what you remember.)*

How long have I actually been taking it?

Have I noticed any difference since taking it – good or bad?

Did I start or change anything else around the same time?

Do I know how much to take, how long it was meant to be taken for, and whether there was ever a plan to review it?

Has a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional ever looked at this alongside my medicines, health conditions and other supplements?

What am I still unsure about or want to ask?

Supplement 2:

What made me decide to try this, and what was I hoping it might help with?

How long have I actually been taking it?

Have I noticed any difference since taking it – good or bad?

Did I start or change anything else around the same time?

Do I know how much to take, how long it was meant to be taken for, and whether there was ever a plan to review it?

Has a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional ever looked at this alongside my medicines, health conditions and other supplements?

What am I still unsure about or want to ask?

Supplement 3:

What made me decide to try this, and what was I hoping it might help with?

How long have I actually been taking it?

Have I noticed any difference since taking it – good or bad?

Did I start or change anything else around the same time?

Do I know how much to take, how long it was meant to be taken for, and whether there was ever a plan to review it?

Has a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional ever looked at this alongside my medicines, health conditions and other supplements?

What am I still unsure about or want to ask?

The hidden stuff

It isn't always a simple decision

Writing this has reminded me of something – we don't talk about the hidden stuff that comes with buying a supplement. Why would we?!

We talk about whether it works, the side effects, or we compare brands.

But we don't talk about the 'hope' that came with buying it in the first place. Or how hard it can be to know when to stop. Or the money we've spent over the years because we couldn't bear the thought of missing something that might have helped.

That can make reviewing a supplement much harder than it looks.

Choose one of the supplements you're unsure about and finish any of these sentences that feel useful.

I'm worried about stopping this because...

I feel I ought to keep taking it because...

The thing that makes this difficult to decide is...

If you're choosing supplements for your child, partner or someone else you care for, there may be another layer to this.

You may be wondering whether you've done enough, whether you've missed something or whether stopping means you're giving up on them.

I remember that feeling.

Noticing it doesn't tell you whether the supplement should stay or go. But it may help you understand why the decision has felt so difficult.

Then there's the money

What is all of this costing?

Something else that has just occurred to me writing this is 'the money'.

I shudder to think how much we'd spent over the years. But the funny thing is, I don't remember ever feeling annoyed about spending it, or regretting it.

At the time, every single purchase felt like the right thing to do because we were hoping it might help.

You may feel the same. You may also feel worried, guilty or embarrassed about how much you're spending now. Perhaps supplements are causing tension at home, or you've found yourself hiding another delivery because you don't want to have the conversation again.

None of that means you've been foolish.

But the cost still matters, especially if illness has affected your ability to work or money is already tight.

Look back at the monthly total on your list and answer whatever feels useful.

Does the total surprise me?

Are there any supplements I keep buying even though I'm not sure why?

Is there anything I'd like to ask a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional about before I buy it again?

Is the cost of anything putting pressure on me or my family?

Money you've already spent doesn't mean you have to keep spending it. But I know that can be easier to say than to act on, particularly when a bottle still feels like the chance that something might help.

For now, just notice what needs a closer look.

Your next steps

Don't try to sort everything out today

Looking back, I think the biggest mistake I could have made when I tipped those tins onto the table would have been trying to make a decision about every bottle, container or pouch there and then.

So I'm not going to ask you to do that.

Choose no more than three next steps. You may decide to:

- ask a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional to look at your supplement and medication list
- find out why you originally started something
- find out what a supplement was meant to do and whether there was ever a plan to review it
- make a note to discuss one supplement at your next appointment
- check whether anything has expired and ask a pharmacist how to dispose of it safely
- set a date to review something, rather than wondering about it every day
- decide not to add anything new until you've looked at what you already take
- leave something exactly as it is because its purpose feels clear

My three next steps:

1.

2.

3.

What can wait?

That last question matters. Not everything needs an answer today.

Your summary

What feels clearer now?

You don't need a perfectly organised cupboard at the end of this. You just need a slightly clearer picture than the one you started with.

The supplements I feel clear about are:

The supplements I would like to review are:

The questions I want to take to a pharmacist, GP or suitably qualified health professional are:

The main thing I've realised is:

If all you've managed today is to make a list and spot one thing you'd like to ask about, that's enough. At least it's no longer all in your head.

A final note from Jo

When I tipped those two tins onto the kitchen table, I didn't feel embarrassed by what was there.

Every supplement had felt like a sensible decision at the time. We'd bought each one because we were trying to help our son feel better.

Looking back, I can see the hope, the money, the research, the responsibility and the constant decisions that had come with them. No wonder the cupboard had become more than a cupboard.

Perhaps yours has too.

This guide isn't about caring less about your health or giving up on something that may be helping. It's simply about taking a closer look at what you're taking, why you're taking it and which questions still need answering.

You don't have to work all of that out on your own.

Warmly,





About Jo

I write and work with people who feel exhausted by the constant researching, appointments, supplements and decisions that can build up around chronic illness.

My background is in science research and communication, and I'm a Functional Medicine Certified Health Coach. I've also spent years living alongside complex chronic illness in my own family, so I know how easily trying to help yourself, or someone you love, can start taking over far too much of life.

I don't diagnose or tell people which treatments or supplements to take. My work is about helping people step back, make sense of everything they're already trying to manage and work out what needs their attention now – and what can wait.

You can find more articles, resources and information about working with me at **josaxtonhealth.com**.

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