

How to Introduce Premium Vitamins & Supplements to Your Store Mix

Is This Right For Your Store?

To be successful in selling premium vitamins and supplements, you must believe **100 percent** in the line(s)/brand(s) of supplements you choose to offer and recommend in your store; otherwise, you will never be able to convince anyone to invest in high-end products. You must have passion to compel your customers to invest in their health with your recommended line of supplements.

Getting Started

Research the lines you are considering carrying. For ideas, read [Drug Muggers](#) by Suzy Cohen. Pay special attention to the “What’s in My Cupboard” chapter, which includes brand names and contact information for the author’s favorites. Other sources for ideas are your peers, particularly pharmacists who focus on compounding.



There are two schools of thought on how best to prepare a selection of premium vitamins and supplements. One is to **be brand loyal**, which means to use one brand as a source for the majority of the products you choose to carry. This option allows you to build brand loyalty among your customers that, in turn, will encourage companion sales. For example, a customer may be very happy with his results from the brand of CoQ10 you carry and now wishes to add to his supplement regiment with Buffered C, B12, D3 and omega-3 within the same proven brand. Brand loyalty also allows you to build brand awareness as your “health team recommended” brand and lets you purchase from one source, acquire signage and marketing materials, collect co-op advertising moneys, and offer a sample program.

An equally popular option is to **include what you have determined to be the best of each type of supplement**; that is, CoQ10 from one brand and B12 from another, etc. This eclectic approach gives you the confidence to offer what you believe are the best brands for your customers and shows them you have done your due diligence in choosing the best lines for their health (loyalty to customer, not label – that in itself offers a worthwhile advantage). If you choose this path, one source to purchase multiple brands would be a company like Emerson Ecologics. Most drug wholesalers do not offer high-end premium or pharmaceutical grade supplements.

Note: There are a few categories where one-brand loyalty would be best in all situations, such as subcategories of omegas/fish oils, single letter vitamins A through Z, and herbs.

Focus on Certain Categories

The most successful vitamin/supplement categories include heart health; bone health; immune support; energy boosters; sleep support; adrenal gland support; alternative remedies for digestive health like probiotics; diabetes management; and relief from stress, gout, allergies, and pain/inflammation. Most

importantly, you need to offer a premium multi-vitamin. This item will serve as the anchor vitamin in your supplement offering. The most profitable and best-selling supplement product you can offer is a quality probiotic.

Merchandising and Product Placement

In most cases, a vitamin section that incorporates a traditional class of vitamins, national vitamin brands (One-A-Day, Centrum, OcuVite, etc.) and a premium selection can take up at least 8 to 12 feet of shelving space. The traditional class (less expensive products) only needs to be a total of 4 feet; your premium section (A to Z single vitamins, disease state-specific vitamins, multi-vitamins, and herbs) will use 6 to 8 feet of fixture space. The remaining space should be allocated for the nationally advertised brands. It is important to keep all of the sections adjacent to each other. This allows the traditional class vitamin purchasers to inquire about the premium lines. If your pharmacy fills more than 150 scripts a day, you should consider moving your vitamins away from the pharmacy area to across the aisle from either the cough & cold section or the antacid/laxative section. The optimum space would be on a wall labeled "Wellness Center." Use "Our Pharmacist recommends" signs for your premium line of supplements. Consider cross-merchandising your premium brand products as a comparison to well-advertised national brand supplements. However, this requires sufficient inventory to place selected products in two locations.

Important: At the very least, maintain an inventory of three each of all of the premium vitamins/supplements you choose to carry. Running out of stock means losing a sale.

Pricing

Along with an enhanced level of customer loyalty, premium lines of vitamins and supplements offer a bigger ring at the register and an average profit margin of 45 percent or more. Premium supplement vendors do not offer price stickers and few will offer shelf tags. To lessen sticker shock, price your supplements on the bottom or back of the packaging, not on the front or cap. If you are considering using the manufacturer's suggested retails, be sure to compare with other retailers first to keep prices competitive. You do not need to be the best price in town, but your product has to be somewhat competitively priced. Round up the retail prices so they all end with a 9. One idea to relieve sticker shock is to break down the package/bottle cost to a daily dosage cost, and then compare the daily dosage cost to the cost of a cup of coffee or candy bar. There are two kinds of vitamins: one that makes your wallet feel good, and one that makes you feel good. The decision is yours.

Marketing

In-store signage is key to the success of your premium vitamin department. When merchandising, make sure to leave room for signage as in-store signage is the most valuable and inexpensive segment of your marketing strategy. Roadside signage will also be an important tool in bringing attention to your lines. Consider direct marketing to physician offices, dedicating a significant part of your website to describing the premium lines, writing a blog post, and investing in targeted Facebook advertising.

-- Gabe Trahan, NCPA Senior Director of Store Operations and Marketing
NCPA Front-End Overhaul