

# SUPPLEMENTS AND MCAS



If you have Mast Cell Activation Syndrome, then you know how unpredictable your body can be. A supplement that seems harmless to most people might leave you dealing with days of fatigue, itching, brain fog, or digestive issues. Even products labeled “all natural” or “hypoallergenic” aren’t always safe bets.

This guide is for you. Whether you’re thinking about adding a new supplement or just trying to make sense of what’s safe, the goal here is to help you make informed, low-risk decisions based on what we know about MCAS.

## SO YOU HAVE THE SIGNS OF MCAS

MCAS happens when your mast cells, which are immune cells that normally protect you, become overly active and release too many chemicals like histamine. This release can happen with or without a clear trigger and can affect multiple systems in the body.

You might experience:

- **Skin symptoms:** redness, itching, hives, or swelling
- **Cardiovascular symptoms:** low blood pressure, rapid heart rate, or dizziness
- **Gastrointestinal symptoms:** nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or cramping
- **Respiratory symptoms:** throat tightness, wheezing, or shortness of breath
- **Neurological symptoms:** brain fog, balance issues, or memory trouble



Triggers can include stress, temperature changes, certain foods, strong smells, or even seemingly nothing at all. Managing MCAS usually involves medications like antihistamines or mast cell stabilizers and figuring out your individual triggers over time.

## WHY SUPPLEMENTS CAN BE SO HIT OR MISS

If you’ve ever reacted to a vitamin or herbal remedy, you’re not alone. With MCAS, the issue isn’t always the supplement itself. Sometimes it’s how it’s processed, packaged, or preserved. Even something you tolerated last month might cause a flare now if your system is already under stress.

This doesn’t mean you need to avoid supplements entirely. It just means having a plan and knowing what to watch for can make the process a lot safer.

# SUPPLEMENTS THAT COMMONLY CAUSE ISSUES



1

## Shellfish-Derived Ingredients

Fish oil and glucosamine are often made from shellfish. Even when labeled purified, they can still cause reactions.

2

## Amino Acids That Influence Histamine

Histidine and NAC (N-acetylcysteine) can increase histamine or affect how your body breaks it down. Others like lysine, tyrosine, and ornithine may be converted into biogenic amines by gut bacteria, which can aggravate symptoms.

3

## Quercetin and Green Tea Extract

These are often used to support mast cell stability, but they can also interfere with enzymes that regulate stress chemicals in the brain. For some people, this leads to overstimulation, anxiety, or trouble sleeping.

4

## High-Dose Vitamins

- **Vitamin D** is important, but high doses without testing your levels can lead to symptoms.
- **Vitamin C**, especially in doses over 1000 mg, can cause bloating or loose stools.

5

## Magnesium Sulfate

Often used in Epsom salt baths or supplements, this form of magnesium can cause symptoms like joint pain, irritability, or agitation.

# HOW TO CHOOSE SUPPLEMENTS WITH LESS RISK



## 3 Minimize Distractions

Don't skip the "other ingredients" section. That's often where fillers and preservatives hide.



You don't need to fear supplements, but taking a few extra steps can reduce your risk of symptoms.

## 1 Try One Thing at a Time

Introduce only one new supplement every few days so you can clearly observe any reactions. Keep a log of what you take and how you feel.



## 4 Look for Third-Party Testing

Products certified by USP, NSF, or similar groups are held to higher quality standards, meaning they're less likely to contain unlisted ingredients or contaminants.



## 2 Avoid Blends with Hidden Formulas

Stick to products that list every ingredient and amount. Blends with undisclosed formulations are harder to evaluate.



## 5 Ask Before You Buy

Reach out to supplement companies or consult with a pharmacist or MCAS-aware provider. You deserve answers about what you're putting into your body.

# WHAT TO DO WHEN THINGS DON'T GO AS PLANNED



## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PROVIDER

Not sure how to bring this up in an appointment?

Here are a few things you can ask:

- "Could this supplement interact with any of my current medications?"
- "Is there a version without fillers or unnecessary additives you recommend?"
- "Can we come up with a plan to try this one step at a time?"

Having these questions ready can help you feel more confident going into the conversation.

Managing MCAS means staying curious, cautious, and flexible. You won't be able to predict every reaction, but you can reduce your chances of getting caught off guard.

If a supplement causes symptoms, that doesn't mean you did something wrong. That reaction is information you can use to decide your next step.

Start small. Track your responses. Make choices based on what works for your system right now. And whenever possible, keep your doctor in the loop—especially if something isn't going as expected.

## REFERENCES & FURTHER READING

- Mast Cell Activation Syndrome (MCAS): Symptoms & Treatment – Cleveland Clinic: <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/mast-cell-activation-syndrome>
- American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology – MCAS: <https://www.aaaai.org/conditions-treatments/related-conditions/mcas>
- Mast Cell Action: <https://www.mastcellaction.org/about-mcas>
- What is MCAS? – Allergy & Asthma Network: <https://allergyasthmanetwork.org/mast-cell-diseases/mcas/>
- TMS – The Mast Cell Disease Society: <https://tmsforacure.org/overview/mast-cell-activation-syndromes/>