



Prevagen Review: A Word of Caution

Prevagen is an over-the-counter product marketed to older adults with claims to improve memory loss associated with aging and increase healthy brain function, although clinical research validating such claims is limited. The main ingredient in Prevacen is apoaequorin, a protein originally derived from the luminescent proteins of jellyfish.

Key Features

Apoaequorin, the main ingredient in Prevacen, is a calcium-binding protein originally found in jellyfish, but the supplement features a lab-manufactured synthetic version of this protein.

According to the product label, the recommended dose is one capsule daily in the morning with or without food.

A regular-strength capsule of Prevacen contains 10 milligrams of apoaequorin, an extra-strength capsule contains 20 milligrams of apoaequorin and a professional-strength capsule contains 40 milligrams apoaequorin. All strengths **also contain 50 micrograms of vitamin D.**

The company claims results take effect within 90 days.

Headquartered in Madison, Wisconsin, **Quincy Bioscience** is the biotechnology company responsible for manufacturing Prevacen.

In 2017 the state of New York and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a claim against the company, asserting that it made **false and unsubstantiated claims in Prevacen marketing regarding memory improvement and cognitive health benefits that violated the Federal Trade Commission Act and the laws of the state.**

The class action lawsuit was settled in 2020, allowing Quincy Bioscience to continue marketing Prevacen with a court-approved disclaimer, **“based on a clinical study of subgroups of individuals who were cognitively normal or mildly impaired.”**

However, many **remain critical of this settlement**, given that this disclaimer’s technical meaning isn’t likely understood by the typical consumer of the product.

There are no peer-reviewed, independent, clinical studies available to support the health claims made directly by the makers of Prevacen regarding the product’s efficacy. The company’s website and other marketing materials state that Prevacen results are clinically proven, but the clinical research cited was performed by parent company Quincy Bioscience, which raises concerns about conflicts of interest.

Prevagen at a Glance

Intended use: Users are advised to take one capsule daily by mouth in the morning with or without food, according to the product packaging. Chewable varieties are also available.

Cost: Prices range from \$39.95 for 30 regular strength capsules (each containing 10 milligrams of apoaequorin) to \$89.95 for 30 professional strength capsules (each containing 40 milligrams of apoaequorin). Prices and discounts vary by retailer.

Side effects: The product website doesn’t disclose any information regarding potential side effects. Instead, it says, “If you are concerned with any side effects, you may want to talk with your doctor before beginning Prevacen use.”

How Does Prevacen Work?

Research suggests there’s a range of substances, drugs, herbs and foods that have the capacity to enhance cognition. With over 50 million people living with dementia worldwide as of 2017 and over 10 million new cases appearing each year, it’s no surprise that cognitive health proves to be a profitable area for drug and supplement development and sales[1].

Prevagen is an oral dietary supplement that must be digested before entering the bloodstream and traveling to the central nervous system (CNS) to have any subsequent effect on brain tissue or neurons. **For an oral herb, drug or supplement to work to enhance memory or cognitive function, it would need to remain intact during digestion and then cross the blood-brain-barrier (BBB). Research shows that after the digestive process, if Prevagen proved able to cross the BBB and bind to calcium to cause a change in the CNS, its bioavailability could be too low in the doses provided in each capsule to produce a significant pharmacological effect.**

The product website only lists one clinical study to support its efficacy, which is sponsored by Quincy Bioscience, the manufacturer of Prevagen. This study claims to use quantitative measures of memory and cognitive function to assess adult participants over 40 years old, and it states that the active ingredient apoaequorin is intended to support brain cells. **Results reveal no significant cognitive health changes overall in participants who took Prevagen, with minor results in those who joined the study with either minimal or no cognitive impairment.**

Adverse effects of apoaequorin are very rare, but research suggests they can include **headache, nausea, constipation, edema and hypertension.**

Prevagen comes in three formulations—regular strength, extra strength and professional strength—and 30-capsule and 60-capsule quantities.

“Prevagen must be taken for at least 90 days so the brain has time to acclimate to the product,” according to a representative from Quincy Bioscience. *“The most cost-effective variety is the regular strength, with 10 milligrams of apoaequorin, but the most popular seller is the extra strength [formula] with 20 milligrams of apoaequorin.”*

How Much Does Prevagen Cost?

PREVAGEN PRODUCT	30 CAPSULES	60 CAPSULES
Regular Strength	\$39.95	\$74.95
Extra Strength	\$59.95	\$109.95
Professional Strength	\$89.95	N/A

Prevagen is available online via the product website and both online and in stores via a number of major retailers, including Walmart, Walgreens, CVS, Safeway, RiteAid, Bed Bath and Beyond, and more. A company representative says it’s important to make sure you’re purchasing Prevagen from an authorized seller, all of which are listed on the product website.

What Experts Say About Prevagen

According to a representative from Quincy Bioscience, Prevagen *“helps improve short-term memory health associated with aging, sharper thinking and memory recall, and overall brain health and function. Apoaequorin was originally found in jellyfish by scientists, and they started to research what made them glow and their protective mechanism of stinging. This research led to the use of the fermented apoaequorin used within Prevagen.”*

While research on the **efficacy of synthetic apoaequorin as a memory-supporting ingredient is limited**, research does show that older adults focused on healthy eating can experience cognitive health benefits. *“A healthy dietary pattern has been shown to improve the aging process, including slowing memory and cognitive decline,”* says Amanda Margolin, a registered dietician based in Portland, Oregon. *“There have been numerous studies focusing on the benefits of dietary patterns, such as the Mediterranean diet and the MIND diet, which have been shown to improve cognitive health. If we look at the similarities between eating patterns such as these, we see an emphasis on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, legumes and nuts.”*

The Experience

There are a number of positive customer reviews on the Prevagen website, but very few reviews posted to third-party websites like the Better Business Bureau and TrustPilot. There are thousands of reviews on Amazon for each Prevagen formulation, and the 30-capsule container of regular strength Prevagen averages a star ranking of four stars. Customer feedback ranges from the capsule being easy to take to preferring a tablet option to the price being too high to take a dose daily. **Some also note that they are still waiting to see whether Prevagen makes a difference for their cognitive health.**