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gut check

How to Pick the Best Whey Protein

Posted on Feb 28th 2011 1:00PM by [Kyle Stack](#)

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When a guy hopes to [build muscle](#), he can't rely on simply [lifting weights](#) and eating protein-packed lean meats. Whey protein becomes the go-to source, but not just any kind works.

Eve Pearson-Rodgers, a sports dietitian for [Nutriworks CNC](#) in Dallas, offered tips on which ingredients to avoid, what brands to consider and what time of day provides the greatest benefits. There are simple rules to follow, and once those are heeded, whey protein can become an excellent complement to the protein-laced foods you already eat.

Read the Ingredients

Observe the rule that less is more. "The fewer the ingredients, the better," Rodgers said. Avoid ingredients you can't pronounce and beware of whey protein mixes that contain an abundance of vitamins and minerals.

"If there are 25 things -- even [vitamins](#) and minerals -- it's not necessary when using whey protein," Rodgers explained. "The point is to get protein, not herbs, vitamins and other stuff."

And since whey protein is considered a [supplement](#), not a food product, there is the chance of contamination. That can arise in the form of less whey protein than advertised in each serving, higher levels of mercury and lead.

A study released last June by Consumer Reports found that 15 protein drinks tested contained at least one sample of arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury, all of which can have harmful effects on the body. Read [the study](#) before making your whey protein choice.

More on Building Muscle

- [Designer Whey Protein Blitz](#)
- [8 Foods That Pack on Muscle](#)
- [Building Muscles: the Importance of Protein](#)

When to Consume

This will depend on how often you [exercise](#) -- Rodgers generally recommends that one serving be consumed after each workout. If you pull two-a-days at the gym, that means two servings per day.

Rodgers dismissed the notion of a particular time of day being most favorable for the body's ability to process whey protein. "It doesn't matter whether you take it," Rodgers said.

Incorporate With Food

Oatmeal, yogurt and fruit smoothies are also natural pairings with whey protein. [Milk](#) isn't a bad choice, either, given its [carbohydrate](#) content. Digestion slows when protein is consumed, leaving you feeling full longer. The energy that can be obtained from fast-digesting carbohydrates can be more slowly released when taken with protein.

Rodgers noted that too much whey protein intake can leave one feeling backed up. "The biggest complaint I get from people who are taking too much protein powder is that they're constipated," she said.

People who are lactose intolerant can also be at risk, although Rodgers said anyone who can properly digest cheese will be fine taking whey protein.

How Much to Take

Mike Nicholson, a trainer at the [Chelsea Piers](#) training complex in New York City, advises ingesting 30 to 40 grams of whey protein.

Rodgers recommended that a 180-pound man consume anywhere from 80 to 147 grams of protein per day, with the latter figure serving as the maximum consumption amount for a guy looking to put on muscle. Assess what protein you already consume aside from whey and make the proper adjustment to stay within that range.

Let's be honest, guys, ladies aren't the only ones watching their waistlines. Our Gut Check column offers tailored advice on how to keep your weight in check by offering easy, healthy twists on your favorite foods and exercise advice for men who want to be a little closer to six-pack abs than a beer belly.

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