

Whole Protein Foods Vs. Supplementation

Q & A with Mike Pellegrini – Team Trainwithmike

Q: What is the advantage of taking protein powder? Why can't I just eat protein in real food form?

A: As you probably already know proteins, which are made up of amino acids, are the building blocks of muscle. For exercise/fitness purposes we need it to repair and build muscle tissue. Adding lean sources of protein into our diet also helps augment metabolism facilitating fat burning. The question is supplement vs. whole food, which is better? As per most topics in fitness and nutrition the grey zone tends to be bigger than we would like to think. Everyone is looking for the one word answer, but in reality it almost never exists.

I have always been a proponent of consuming whole foods as much as possible. What I mean by 'whole foods' is foods that have not been altered or broken down from their original natural state, or at least as little as possible (e.g. whole turkey breast vs. packaged turkey meat slices). Some great whole food lean protein choices would be: chicken/turkey breast, egg whites, fish, cottage cheese, tofu, legumes, extra lean cuts of beef...etc. That being said, I have been consuming whey protein shakes and bars for the last 10 years. So you got me, I don't always practice what I preach! Sure I do 😊, but it comes down to lifestyle. The reality is that like most people, I have extremely busy days. When I am seeing clients for 5 to 8 hours in a row, I don't have time to slam down a chicken breast with sweet potatoes and asparagus (I'm getting hungry just thinking about it!). So I grab a shake or a bar, which gives me the right nutrients that I need to keep my body in check. By the way, I give my busy clients the exact same advice. Most people end up skipping meals, which is the worst thing you can do if you want lose fat and build lean muscle tissue. Protein supplements are a "No Excuse" solution for keeping up with your health plan.

On top of being a great lifestyle solution, protein supplementation has come a long way from the powders and bars that would make even the most hardcore gym rats cringe. The powders mix smoothly without a blender and taste good. There are bars on the market that taste better than candy bars...I'm serious! Most importantly the quality of the products have also improved. Whey protein is now the most popular protein supplement, and is touted for having the highest biological value. This basically means that it is more easily broken down by our bodies than animal or vegetable proteins, and therefore quickly provides your muscle cells with the needed nutrients after a workout. The reason for this is that whey protein is higher in essential amino acids and BCAA (branch-chain amino acids). It can also be a better source of protein for those of you wanting to lose body fat, because it is generally lower in fat and carbs than most whole food counterparts. Furthermore, whey uniquely contains certain aminos, which create a very powerful intracellular anti-oxidant called glutathione.

So at the end of the day, I say eat whole foods as much as possible, but when your schedule says otherwise don't hesitate to grab a prepared protein supplement. Also,

consider shakes and bars as an alternative snack or meal replacement to add variety and benefit to your dietary regime.

TIP OF THE WEEK

When choosing a protein powder, make sure whey Isolate is the first ingredient over whey concentrate. Also, make sure the protein has been processed using low heat, or a “cold processing” method. Isolate is a more pure source of protein and the low heat processing will ensure that it’s high qualities are sustained.

RECIPE OF THE WEEK

Protein Pancakes:

Ingredients

1 cup of oatmeal
3 heaping tablespoons of cottage cheese
2 whole eggs
4 egg whites
1/2 banana or 1/2 cup of strawberries
2 scoops of plain whey protein
1 teaspoon of vanilla extract
3 packages of splenda
1/4 cup of walnuts
2 pinches of salt

Method

Chop Walnuts

Mash Banana

Chop Strawberries

Combine all ingredients into a mixer and blend

Stir in Walnuts and chopped strawberries.

Heat your skillet and spray low fat cooking spray.

Pour the batter into skillet to desired size.

Flip when edges start to brown