

One Nutrient You Should Always Take After Your Workout

The next time you flip through a fitness magazine or stroll down the aisles of your neighborhood pharmacy, try to keep count of the number of vitamins, minerals and other supplements you see. It's likely you'll soon lose count as you scratch your head and wonder which of the pills and products you personally need most.

If you work out regularly—and I hope you do—perhaps your gym, trainer, or workout partner praises the benefits of a particular protein powder, recovery drink, or supplement that they claim works wonders when it comes to building muscle, burning fat and helping your body repair itself after tough training sessions.

With countless products on the market and umpteen opinions circulating around fitness circles, it's easy to become overwhelmed about which—if any—supplements are truly best. Indeed, one could spend an entire afternoon online researching dozens of nutrients, from arginine to zinc, and finding that most, if not all, are a “must-take” capsule to include in your daily regimen.

While I believe there are certainly a plethora of beneficial products out there, I think it's important to reasonably consider what your primary needs are as a frequent exerciser. For instance, zinc, a micro mineral, is not a nutrient in which many people are deficient because, as the name suggests, we only need it in trace amounts. The same goes for supplements such as selenium, iron, and iodine; as long as you are consuming plenty of fresh fruits, whole grains, vegetables and protein there's probably no need to invest in

additional supplements containing these minerals.

But what about all those glossy, airbrushed ads of tan and chiseled fitness models touting dozens of different protein shakes, multivitamins, recovery drinks and joint formulas? You want the most out of your workout, but does that mean spending your last paycheck on bottles of amino acids and giant jars of protein? No. In fact, I believe that God-made foods provide everything we need when it comes to strengthening, conditioning and maintaining our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit.

It's during times in which we are unable to consume natural, God-created foods in the proper amounts that we should consider supplementation.

Many of the athletes I coach and train ask me which nutrient I recommend they consume when they don't have time to eat immediately after their workout. My answer? Lysine.

L-lysine, or lysine as it is commonly called, is an essential amino acid that is not produced by the body. This means that it must be supplemented through your daily diet. Your body needs about grams of lysine a day, but it's advisable for consistent exercisers to consume a larger dose, up to 3 grams. L-lysine is especially important after exercising because it aids in the synthesis of protein, which is broken down during your workout.

A lack of lysine can lead to dizziness, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, agitation, kidney stone formation and reproductive disorders.

According to the University of Maryland Medical Center, lysine is important for proper growth, and it plays an essential role in the production of carnitine, a nutrient responsible for converting fatty acids into energy and helping to lower cholesterol. Lysine appears to help the body absorb calcium, and it plays an important role in the formation of collagen, a

substance important for bones and connective tissues including skin, tendon and cartilage.

Immediately following your workout, whether it's strength training or cardio, taking a lysine supplement will kick-start your body's recovery process by encouraging leucine and other essential amino acids to perform their protein synthesis functions more efficiently. However, like most amino acids, lysine doesn't work alone ...

When combined with vitamin C, lysine will turn it into carnitine (mentioned above), which plays a key role in helping the body regulate oxygen and metabolize fat stores. In other words, together lysine and vitamin C help your body burn fat and deliver oxygen to the muscles you've just broken down with weightlifting, running, rowing, etc.

If you're able to eat a meal within an hour after your workout, then I highly recommend you skip the supplements and go straight to these lysine-rich foods:

- Chicken
- Turkey
- Beef
- Fish
- Parmesan cheese
- Eggs
- Tree Nuts (almonds, pistachios, walnuts, macadamias)
- Legumes (peas, lentils)

And, since vitamin C and lysine make a powerful team, here are a few vitamin C sources to accompany your selection from the above lysine list:

- Broccoli
- Honeydew melon
- Orange juice
- Sweet potato
- Brussels sprouts

- Kiwi
- Pineapple
- Strawberries
- Cabbage
- Mango
- Potatoes
- Tomatoes

If, conversely, you don't have time to prepare and eat a proper meal, then I recommend you purchase either a protein powder or a capsule that contains among its ingredients 70mg–1g of lysine in combination with 50-100mg of vitamin C. If you already have vitamin C in your medicine cabinet, simply buy an all-natural protein powder that includes ample lysine in its amino acid profile and have it along with a serving of vitamin C.

Shop around online for the right brand for you, and consult your doctor and/or local health and nutrition store to learn more about supplementing with lysine.

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