

THE BETTER BASICS GUIDE TO: SUPPLEMENTS



Supplements are all the rage, driven by social media influencers promoting quick fixes and silver bullets for various issues. However, it's important to approach these claims with skepticism. Much of what is promoted is exaggerated or not entirely truthful and sometimes complete and total bullshit. Influencers often select data or stories that make their products seem miraculous. Be cautious of unbelievable claims and celebrity endorsements; if something sounds too good to be true, it likely is. Supplements are designed to complement your diet, not magically solve all your problems. Additionally, the supplement industry lacks strict regulation, so products may not always be as advertised. Despite this, some supplements do offer benefits. Always consult a healthcare professional or nutritionist before incorporating any supplements into your routine to ensure they meet your specific needs.

THINGS THAT WE THINK CAN HELP

Addressing deficiencies in vitamins and minerals under a doctor's guidance, can significantly improve your life. Simple things like vitamin D, vitamin B, and magnesium are good examples. However, taking these things blindly can actually be harmful (a reason to be cautious of taking a multivitamin without doctor advice). Too much of a good thing can be a bad thing. So, get your levels tested, talk to your doctor, and find out if supplementation can be a helpful option for you.

Creatine rocks. Creatine is a game changer. It's not steroids like we were led to believe in high school. It's the most studied supplement out there, and is demonstrated to be quite safe with minimal side effects. It enhances muscle, strength, and power. It's been shown to improve exercise performance, especially in high-intensity, short-duration activities. And it's even showing some benefit in brain health and function. Some people experience a bit of gut discomfort, and it can lead to water retention which may show up on the scale in the form of "weight gain" (it's not actually weight gain, your body is just holding more water). As is true for all supplements, everyone responds differently and not all individuals see the same benefits. Creatine monohydrate is the gold standard and it should be inexpensive. If you're interested, give this one a try.

[Creatine Recommendations](#)

Fish oil can be a helpful addition to the diet if you aren't eating much fish. And studies show that most people aren't getting close to enough of the important fatty acids that it provides (DHA, EPA). These omega-3 fatty acids support heart health and may reduce inflammation in the body. There's also evidence supporting its benefit for joint health and cognitive function. However, make sure to take a high quality supplement (which can sometimes be expensive. There's lots of snake (fish) oil out there!) If you're taking it and you get a fishy aftertaste, try throwing it in the freezer. Here's a couple we like.

[Fish Oil Recommendations](#)

Protein supplementation (whey, casein, plant, etc.) can be incredibly helpful for hitting protein goals. It's great to try and get .7-1 gram of protein per pound of target body weight every day from whole foods, but this can be challenging. Protein shakes are a great way to supplement your protein intake. Protein is satiating and helpful for managing overeating and weight management. It's also

essential for muscle repair and growth. Note that overconsumption of protein can lead to kidney strain for individuals with pre-existing kidney issues. And as always, quality matters! Here's a couple we like.

[Protein Powder Recommendations](#)

Essential Amino Acids (EAAs, not BCAAs) can be especially helpful for vegetarians and vegans that aren't getting all of the essential amino acids from their protein sources. As the building blocks of proteins, and similar to protein (which contains amino acids) is important for muscle repair. They can also help reduce muscle soreness and improve recovery. However, most people get enough amino acids from their diet. A quality protein shake is likely a better option for most people. If you are a vegan or are struggling to get adequate protein, here's one you might try (but it's expensive so just eat your protein!).

[EAA Recommendations](#)

Fiber is incredibly important and most people don't get enough from their diet. In fact, many gut experts suggest that the recommended daily allowances (14 grams for every 1,000 calories you eat per day) for fiber are too low. You could attempt to get more, so long as it doesn't cause you gut distress. Fiber is proven to reduce the risk of colon cancer. It supports digestive health and regular poops. It aids in weight management by promoting fullness and even helps regulate blood sugar levels. While best to get it is from whole foods, there are helpful "supplemental" sources like a bran cereal (All Bran Buds are awesome), chia and ground flax seeds, psyllium husk (which may help lower cholesterol), and things like Metamucil. Keep in mind that too much fiber can cause digestive discomfort and nasty farts, so find what's right for you. No supplement recommendation here, just aim to eat lots of berries and fruit, avocado, beans, oats, lentils, whole grain bread, flax and chia, bran cereal (Mix some All Bran Buds with yogurt it ROCKS), etc.

Electrolytes are important, especially if you're drinking lots of water and/or sweating regularly. They're helpful for maintaining fluid balance and nerve function. However, too much of a good thing can be a bad thing, and overconsumption can lead to electrolyte imbalances. Try a pinch of salt in your water, or a supplement like LMNT if this interests you. Here's our favorite.

[Electrolyte Recommendations](#)

Probiotics can support gut health and a balanced microbiome. They may also improve digestive issues and boost the immune system. However, effectiveness varies by strain, and not all probiotics are equal (quality is important, are you sensing a theme here?). You can get probiotics from supplements, or probiotic rich foods like yogurt, sauerkraut, and pickles. Eat your fermented foods. Go the food route first, and if you want to try supplementing here's the best one in our opinion.

[Probiotic Recommendations](#)

Greens Powders are mostly not enough bang for the buck. The best way to get the nutrients they provide is from your diet. However, they can provide a convenient source of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants when required (for instance, when traveling). Again, quality and ingredient purity can vary between brands and is very important and it should not be a replacement for a diverse diet rich in whole fruits and vegetables. We like this one because it has a long shelf life and comes in individual packets for travel.

THINGS THAT ARE PROBABLY MOSTLY NONSENSE AND YOU SHOULD BEWARE

Anything that claims to be a proprietary blend is a huge red flag. If they won't tell you what's in it, don't take it.

Branched-Chain Amino Acids (BCAAs, not to be confused with EAAs) are totally unnecessary for anyone with a well-balanced diet rich in protein (which you should aim for!). They consist of only three essential amino acids: leucine, isoleucine, and valine. While these play a role in muscle protein synthesis, they lack the full spectrum of essential amino acids necessary for optimal muscle growth and repair. Instead, seek a complete protein source like whey, plant, or casein protein or even EAAs.

Collagen has become a darling of the health industry. While it's easier to digest than most sources of protein, and may improve skin health and support joint health, it's limited in its efficacy for muscle and exercise-related benefits. The bang isn't worth the buck here. Eat some chicken soup or have some bone broth instead.

Preworkout Supplements can be fun, but for the average person, the bang isn't worth the buck. They can definitely jack you up and increase energy and performance. But they also come with jitters, tingling skin (depending on the ingredients), and an empty wallet. Have a cup of coffee, a banana, and a bit of salt 30 minutes to an hour before your workout and you'll get what you're looking for at 10% of the cost.

Testosterone Boosters are super hot right now, but most of them are ineffective and lack robust scientific evidence. There is also the potential for all sorts of misunderstood side effects. Look at the [natural things](#) you can do to boost testosterone first, and then consult your doctor if your levels are low.

Fat Burners overpromise. Period. There are very few, if any, supplements that are safe and effective at helping you "burn fat". Diet and exercise will burn fat. A calorie deficit will help you lose weight. Move the big rocks and leave these pebbles on the beach.