

The Power of Protein:

The good news is, a few reputable health and nutrition companies are producing high-tech, high quality, convenient protein powders, bars and pre-made shakes that have the proper balance of nutrients to help you fuel your body and mind throughout the day. I personally use these items for snacks and or meals when I am on the run and in need of some fast fueling. These convenient items can be taken anywhere, and they take the guesswork out of eating right. Many of our superstar clients use these foods to help them eat every three hours without adding extra calories.

These convenient items are great for those times when:

- You're in a rush in the morning and there's no time to fix breakfast.
- You are tempted to skip a meal because you're too busy.
- You're so hungry you're about to grab a "red light" food.
- You need a quick, wholesome snack.
- You are going to work out soon, and your muscles need energy.
- You just finished working out, and your muscles need protein.

I don't want to give you the idea that protein bars and shakes should take the place of eating wholesome foods. Protein shakes, powders (and bars) are meant to be food supplements, not substitutes for a healthy diet. They can add convenience and nutrients to a busy lifestyle, and they can help you monitor your food consumption. However, for optimal health, you still need to provide your body with a variety of whole, natural foods as well.

How to Select the Best Protein Powder (or Meal Replacement Bar, or Shake)

If you have never thought about protein powder, bars or shakes before, welcome to the food supplement industry. There are hundreds of products to choose from, but all you need for your new fitness program is some protein powder to make the 4•3•2•1 Protein Smoothie, and possibly some protein bars or ready-made shakes to have on hand when you're in a hurry.

I recommend that you buy whey isolate protein powder, shakes or bars.

When researching the different protein powders on the market, ask yourself:

1. “What are my goals?” Are you interested in losing weight? If so, choose a protein powder formula (or meal replacement bar, or shake) that has fewer calories and that does not contain high amounts of added sugar or carbohydrates. Do you want to bulk up those muscles by eating some protein after working out to build muscle mass? If so, the caloric value of your products should be higher.

2. “Which source of protein is right for me?” The three most popular protein sources are milk, egg, and soy.

- *Whey Protein* (filtered from cow's milk). Whey makes up 20% of milk protein. It is considered one of the best protein sources because it is digested easily, absorbed quickly, and has an amazing amino acid profile. It is ideal to use as a snack, as well as before, during or after a workout. There are generally two types of concentrated whey available. *Whey protein isolate* (WPI) contains less lactose, fat, and sugar per serving, making it ideal when trying to lose weight. Whey protein isolate also contains approximately 90-98% protein. *Whey protein concentrate* contains 70-85% protein. Often you will see a protein supplement with a blend of these two sources. Sometimes a manufacturer will

feature whey protein isolate on the packaging, but closer reading of the label shows it is not the first (main) ingredient.

- *Casein protein* (also filtered from cow's milk). Casein makes up 80% of milk protein.

It is also an excellent protein, but it is digested more slowly than whey protein and therefore not recommended for before or during workouts.

- *Egg Protein*. Considered the perfect protein, eggs provide all of the essential amino acids our body needs. Egg protein, like whey protein, scores 100 (out of a possible 100) on a biological value rating, meaning all of the protein from the egg is absorbed and utilized by the human body. Egg protein primarily comes from the white of the egg. If you wish, you can eat just the egg whites to get the protein without the fat in the yolk. Another option is to buy an egg supplement and mix it into shakes or recipes.

- *Soy Protein* (from soybeans). Soy provides natural bioactive components such as isoflavones. At 90% protein, soy protein isolate is the most concentrated form. Of all vegetables, soy is the most complete, and it provides the body with what it needs for growth and repair. Soy compares favorably to high quality animal proteins,.

3. “What brand do I trust?” A 2007 Food and Drug Administration (FDA) ruling requires that supplements must be made according to good manufacturing practices, which has helped control the quality of the products on the market. Supplements are supposed to be produced in a quality manner, without contaminants or impurities, and they should be accurately labeled. However, the fact that the government tries to enforce these rulings does not guarantee you are getting what is on the label. Always check out the companies you are buying from and make sure they are reputable, with the highest quality standards. Look for a company that lists all the ingredients on their products. My

personal favorite supplement company and the one I recommend is Nutrilite. Nutrilite combines the highest quality research, science and manufacturing practices to make the finest products you can buy.

4. “What flavor do I want?” Some brands are flavored and sweetened; others are neutral. You may want to keep a chocolate variety and a vanilla flavor on hand so you can make a variety of different 4•3•2•1 Protein Smoothies (see the delicious recipes on page 000). Try several brands until you find your favorite(s). You can try out different types by purchasing a protein shake at a fitness center, trying a friend’s protein powder, or getting a free taste of a protein shake or bar at a health food store, discount center, or from an independent supplement distributor. Some products taste thin or gritty, while others are thick and delicious.

As always, it’s important to read labels. First, identify the type of protein in the product (whey concentrate, whey isolate, casein, egg, soy, or some combination). See if the ingredients are listed as a total blend (in which case, they are listed in descending order of predominance), or by serving size. Determine how much of each protein (in grams) is in one serving of the product. Check the amount of fat, sugars, and total calories per serving. See what nutrients (for example, vitamins and minerals) are present in significant enough amounts to be listed. Lastly, look for the presence of any preservatives or artificial colorings.

Serving sizes can be tricky, so don’t make any assumptions. For example, you may assume that “one serving” of protein powder means “two scoops,” but the manufacturer may base the ingredient information on a serving size that is smaller or larger than that. Product A and Product B might both have 50 milligrams of a particular

substance per serving – but you need two scoops of Product A for one serving, and only one scoop of Product B. Or product A may have 30 milligrams per serving, while Product B only has 20 milligrams per serving. Sounds like Product A is the better buy – until you find out you need two scoops of Product A for a full serving, and only one scoop of Product B.