

## Power Up Your Smoothie

When your stomach starts growling at 10:00 a.m. or you find yourself feeling weak after your workout, you may be running low on protein. “While most women get the recommended 70 to 90 grams daily, they consume too much at dinner and too little at breakfast and lunch,” says sports dietitian Heather Mangieri, R.D., a spokeswoman for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. “Spreading out your protein intake helps you feel full and energized and assists in building and repairing your muscles throughout the day.” →

By Nicole Yorio Jurick

PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVID M. CORTES  
Shot on location at the Smyth, a  
Thompson Hotel, in New York City

While getting the nutrient from real food is best, protein powder is an easy, convenient and healthy way to boost your daytime intake—and, no, it's not just for bodybuilders. "It's a great option for women who are trying to lose weight or gain lean muscle," Mangieri says. Here's the scoop on what protein powder can do and which kind is right for you.

## Whey

Consider it the gold standard for your postworkout needs: Whey, which makes up about 20 percent of the protein found in a glass of milk, is a complete protein, meaning that it contains all nine essential amino acids. The body absorbs whey efficiently, so it's a good option for replenishing muscles after a sweat session. "Adding 15 to 25 grams of protein to a carb-rich recovery snack or meal helps repair muscle tissue," Mangieri says. "You can do this best during the 30- to 45-minute window following a hard workout." Sip a smoothie that includes a three to one ratio of carbs to protein *before* you shower to help your muscles work at their peak the next time you go to the gym.

**123 calories and 28 grams of protein per serving**

## Casein

Your body digests this dairy-based complete protein more slowly than whey. "If you're looking to repair muscles after your workout, whey is the best choice, but casein is great, too," Mangieri says. "And because casein is absorbed steadily and can help you feel fuller longer, it's ideal to eat with your breakfast." Bonus: Casein is naturally high in glutamine, an amino acid that helps reduce muscle soreness.

**137 calories and 24 grams of protein per serving**

## Soy

The only plant-based complete protein, soy is a good alternative for vegans. It contains soy isoflavones, which improve bone density and may fight free radicals in the body. Soy powder has a more intense flavor than other varieties and tastes best when blended with ingredients like bananas, peanut butter or cocoa powder. Soy isn't for everyone, though. Research links a high consumption of the protein with an increased risk of breast cancer among women who have a history of estrogen-positive breast cancer, says Barbara Lewin, R.D., a sports nutritionist whose clients include Olympic and professional athletes. And if you have a thyroid condition, soy can reduce the effectiveness of the gland's hormones.

**120 calories and 25 grams of protein per serving**

## Pea

This plant-based pick can help you eat less. A study in *Nutrition Journal* found that people who

### Beyond the Blender

Putting a scoop of protein powder in your smoothie is a no-brainer. "Your body needs a carb, like fruit, to transport protein quickly to your muscles and absorb it efficiently for recovery and growth following exercise," says Christine Gerbstadt, R.D., the author of *The Doctor's Detox Diet*. If you're looking to switch things up, there are plenty of other tasty ways to sneak the powders into your diet.

- Put one scoop of whey or casein into your morning oatmeal.
- Whisk two scoops of brown rice or hemp into pancake or waffle mix.
- Add two scoops of hemp to curries, soups and stews.
- Stir one scoop of pea or hemp into hummus, guacamole or black bean dip.
- Replace up to ¼ cup of flour in a muffin or quick-bread recipe with whey or soy.

## Protein Powder Decoded

Skimming the nutrition labels of powders practically requires a dictionary. Ryan Andrews, R.D., explains what you need to know.

### Choose the right type

*Protein isolates* are 90 to 95 percent protein and best if you want more pure protein per serving.

*Protein concentrates* are 60 to 70 percent protein. They retain some fat, fiber and beneficial compounds of the protein source, such as omega-3s in hemp. *Hydrolyzed proteins* can be easier to digest because they've been pretreated with enzymes to break the large protein chains into shorter peptides.

### Watch the sugar content

French vanilla and rich chocolate protein powders may sound delicious, but some may be higher in added sugar. Seek out powders with no more than five grams of sugar per scoop. Steer clear of artificial sweeteners like aspartame and xylitol, which can cause bloating, gas or other health problems. Instead, opt for formulas sweetened with stevia, or mix a little honey or maple syrup with plain powder.

### Avoid additives

Common ones like creatine, a chemical that can boost athletic performance, can separate from protein in the bottle, leading you to unknowingly ingest all creatine and no protein. Using a powder with as much pure protein as possible is the only way to know exactly how many grams you're getting per scoop.

consumed 20 grams of pea protein 30 minutes before a meal ate 42 percent less food than those who had the same amount of whey protein. "The body takes longer to absorb pea protein, and that can help keep you from feeling hungry," Mangieri says. Lewin suggests that you check the label to make sure the supplement has at least 2,000 milligrams of leucine, an amino acid that enhances muscle repair and growth. Pea protein isn't a complete protein, so eat other sources throughout the day to round out your intake.

**103 calories and 23 grams of protein per serving**

### Hemp

Derived from the nutrient-dense seeds of the hemp plant, this near-complete protein has up to nine grams of fiber per scoop; that protein-and-fiber combo helps promote satiety and weight loss. Plus, hemp contains omega-6 fatty acids, good fats that can reduce inflammation, prevent heart disease and improve brain function, Mangieri says. The downside? Hemp powders often cost more and have a lot less protein per

scoop than most others.

**100 calories and 12 grams of protein per serving**

### Brown rice

This whole grain creates a protein powder rich in B vitamins, fiber and iron. Easy to digest, brown rice protein is a good option for anyone with stomach problems or a soy or dairy allergy (it's hypoallergenic). One caveat: The naturally occurring arsenic in rice can concentrate in the powder. Read labels and choose a brand that tests for arsenic levels, says Ryan Andrews, R.D., a nutrition coach for Precisionnutrition.com.

**50 calories and 10 grams of protein per serving ●**

### Triple Threat

*Want seriously sculpted arms? After your next workout, whip up a blend of whey, casein and soy powders, which can spur muscle growth better than whey alone can, a new study in the *Journal of Applied Physiology* found. Your body digests each of the proteins at different rates; combining them extends the available supply of amino acids, and hence the ability to build muscle, by up to four hours, says study coauthor Dillon Walker, Ph.D., of Texas A&M University.*