

The beginners guide to diet supplementation

I've received over the years, many emails from people with the following theme. Supplements: it's a jungle isn't it? There are so many, what do they do? How important are they? Do I have to spend a fortune on them if I want to take my sport seriously? Most importantly, do they work?? Help me!!!

To which I always reply, whoa there, just take a deep breath and we'll untangle the mystery in a calm and orderly fashion. Let's start by reading the title of this piece again because it's very important that you know what we're talking about and that is diet supplementation, not living on pills, powders and potions. Let's get one thing straight right now; your diet is the most important thing in your whole regime and supplements are there to compliment and enhance it, to SUPPLEMENT it, not replace it. Being as I am sponsored by a supplements company you might expect me to just recommend a whole shopping cart full of their stuff but I'm very proud to say that Coresport have the same level of integrity that I have, and they have asked me to give some honest advice, so that's what I'll do. The truth of the matter is that you could spend a fortune on supplements but you really don't need to. For example, did you know that some so called "miracle" supplements are nothing of the sort? On the label it will say "may help with muscle development" or something similar; usually these things cost something like £40 a time too. £40 and it "may" help? For £40 of my hard earned I want it to be guaranteed to do what it says on the tin! In fact let's start with that, as they say in the adverts "always read the label" well in the case of supplements that is rule number 1. Be careful how you read them too, clever people can produce misleading labels so always just look at what every 100 grams of product has in it. It's that simple, because that means that if it says it has 20 grams of fat and 20 grams of sugar per 100 grams of product then it means that you're buying something that is 40% rubbish!

So, as long as you have a "won't get fooled" attitude lets look at a few more rules to remember before you start eagerly browsing the internet with your credit card in hand. Firstly remember what you're buying, a product to enhance your diet. Not the name - "super duper king kong extremely powerful massive muscle gainer" for example really won't do what it suggests! You're not buying the pretty tub either, now matter how gorgeous the model on it is, or buying into the outrageous claims that are just good old fashioned lies - "transform yourself into Mr Olympia in just a few weeks" or "live on burgers and our fat burners will still make you lose weight" again is something that simply isn't going to happen! Look, if it was that easy wouldn't everyone look great? Supplements will only work if they are part of a good diet and training plan; no supplement company can sell you a miracle! Don't believe what you read or hear unless it comes from someone who you can trust who has had visibly good results, and I don't mean photo shopped photos either, I mean before your very eyes! Endorsements by athletes are not always that reliable either, personally I've never endorsed a product unless it's consistently worked for me but there are one or two people in this game who would tell you to join the Taliban if their sponsors made it worth their while. So be aware! Always read the label – carefully, and compare product labels wherever possible, you'll be glad that you did.

Ok, so which supplements do you need and which ones are optional? Well first and foremost, protein is the most important supplement that you need because you will struggle to eat enough from normal sources in a day. Whey protein is the best but there are many different standards of this stuff at vastly variable prices. What you ideally want is a blend of WHEY proteins, a lot of companies pack out their protein powders with cheap low quality proteins like soya protein to save costs so avoid these at all costs. It needs to be at least 80% protein too, that means at least 80 grams of good quality protein in every 100 grams of product (remember what I said about labels?) Follow that basic rule and you will discard a huge amount of cheap and nasty choices. Whilst it's often true that you get what you pay for, with some companies you're actually paying for the name. Again, simply compare labels, nothing else, I guarantee that you will be surprised. Depending on your goals you also need to be very aware of what else is in the product. Again some companies will use a lot of cheap fillers and additives to get the weight up and the quality down, I know that I sound like a broken record but just compare the labels! My recommendation is Coresports diet whey; I swear by this stuff and use it twice a day, with breakfast and after training, the two most important feeds of the day!

Talking about that, the next most important supplement is the one that you have post workout. After a workout you need to feed the muscles and restore glycogen in a hurry. To do this you need a blend of whey protein, BCAA's, Creatine and, believe it or not, a small amount of sugar and fats. There has been a long raging debate about whether you should spike your insulin after training so that your body will absorb the nutrients in your post workout shake. It's something that I've always believed in and I won't ever change my mind now so I ignore the debate these days because I know what works for me and for all of the many successful athletes that I coach. Core Complete has all of the ingredients required to spike your insulin and feed the muscles, all portions are carefully calculated so that a normal person doesn't need anything else but personally I use Core Complete with some added Core diet whey for the extra protein and I also add 10 grams of glutamine and 20 grams of Vitargo. Maybe I'm going over the top but I don't want to take any chances, I push myself to the limit in the gym so I don't risk not having enough nutrients in my post workout drink to compensate for that.

These days pre workout nutrition has come very much to the fore. Being an old school bodybuilder a pre workout for me was always a cup of strong coffee with BCAA's and Creatine tablets followed by a slap around the face from my coach; that still works today but there are less painful ways! Not everyone can take pre workouts, personally I don't, simply because all nitric oxide formulas make my delicate stomach gassy but I'm very much in a minority and most people these days love pre workouts. As long as the N.O. doesn't affect you then Core Explode is a great product to use as it will pre load you with nutrients that you will burn up during training and it will also give you a great kick in the pants to get you into your workout. At my gym we sell tons of the stuff every evening as people come straight from work to train, it wakes them up after a long day at work and it means that they can produce a great workout despite being tired! No wonder Core Explode has become so popular!

Now you may have noticed that I've mentioned Creatine a few times. Well that is because it is, and always has been "the bomb" when it comes to legal supplements. To this day I'm still asked if it's a steroid, it's that good! The answer is no, it's not a

steroid and it's not on the banned list of any bodybuilding federation, so you can and should take it every day. As with anything that works there will always be exceptions to the rule and the odd person will pop up saying bad things about the product. Well we're all different so Creatine may have an adverse effect on a miniscule fraction of people that use it, as will anything, but I've been using the stuff since it came out which must be 25 years ago at least and I've never ever had any problems because of it, nor has anyone that I've ever known, so I hope that puts it into context. There are many different kinds of Creatine and they all have slightly different functions but my advice is always stick to the basics. Find a Creatine that absorbs quickly and doesn't encourage water retention as these are the two usual complaints from the few people that don't use it. Core Creatine does the job perfectly and you can use it all year round.

So as you can see my "must haves" in the world of supplements are Whey protein, Post workout shake, BCAA's and Creatine. For me, and a lot of people that compete, Vitargo and Glutamine are also essential but they're not vital to beginners and that's who this article is mainly aimed at. Pre workouts are optional but very popular for the reasons that I've stated.

There is one other product though that I believe will be the next big thing, a lot of people at the top of their sport are using it already and I'm extremely proud to say that I helped the development of the Coresport version of the product. That product is Core Sustain, an intra workout formula. Let's be honest, how many people still just drink water whilst training? Well that's what I did from when I started lifting in 1987 right up until 2013. It was about then that some people began to realise that you can actually feed the muscles whilst training them as long as the formulation that you're adding to your water is meticulously well balanced and incredibly easy to digest. Technology had moved forward enough to make such a product possible now and using an intra workout like Core Sustain means that you can actually feed the muscles and train them at the same time which means quicker recovery, sustained maintenance of energy levels and most importantly that it's possible to train harder for longer. The worst nightmare for the non committed but Utopia for people like me!! Strictly speaking, Core Sustain is not an essential for beginners but if you really want to progress quickly it's definitely worth the investment. It's a product that I'm proud of and I truly believe that it will give me an edge over my rivals for this coming season.