

## GOT WATER? IF NOT, GET SOME

**Athletes often focus on the importance of consuming protein after a practice or workout, but protein goes a lot better with a drink or two**

Does anyone else get annoyed with those advertisements touting the nutritional value of a food or beverage against something else to imply superiority of one over another? For instance: “Has twice the vitamin C of an orange” or “3X more calcium than milk.”

I know there have been quite a few companies sued over the last few years for deceptive advertising. Just because something in its natural state may contain X mg of potassium doesn't mean that is the actual value you're absorbing and utilizing. An average orange may contain about 70-80 mg of vitamin C, but there are tons of foods with more vitamin C per serving – to name a few: bell peppers, broccoli, kale and strawberries.

Do I have a point? Yep. The food and beverage industry has been molding our brains to think and react to food since we were kids. There is a part of our brain that knows a lot of these claims are comparing apples and oranges. (Had to make the pun.)

As a vegan, I am part of a community that does this all the time touting how foods like spirulina (a single-celled alga) have a higher protein content than steak or eggs. While this is true gram for gram, it's a little disingenuous because if you're trying to get a significant amount of protein, that's a lot of spirulina!

Plants have protein, some more than others, and while they have plenty of protein (I feel like I prove this every season), I also want to point out a few interesting tidbits to the omnivore readers about smarter meat and dairy consumption.

We are socialized from a young age that meat and dairy are not only acceptable but optimal sources of protein (and other nutrients). Got \_\_\_\_? Where's the \_\_\_\_? \_\_\_\_, the other white meat. The incredible, edible \_\_\_\_\_. Did you fill in all the blanks correctly? OK, so many of you are eating meat, dairy and eggs consistently. So how can you do this more optimally for athletic performance and recovery?

First of all, STOP focusing on getting protein into your system as soon as possible after a workout. A dehydrated cell is not very efficient at taking in amino acids (or any other nutrients). The most important nutrient for muscle growth and repair is water.

On that note, it's more important to have a quality protein meal two hours before your activity so that you have those amino acids floating around your system or in (limited) storage to release when your body says so. For those of you who don't believe what I just wrote, I'll hit you with some science. Also, remember that you've been told a lot of things in your life that become true to you only because you hear them over and over.

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HGH (human growth hormone) is one of the primary signalers of tissue repair. It releases from your pituitary gland in the highest concentrations at 2 distinct times:

1. When you start to enter a deep sleep.
2. About 30-60 minutes after an intense physical workout.

Digestion produces a hormone called somatostatin that actually tells the pituitary gland to stop producing HGH. In other words, if the first thing you do is reach for a protein shake or eat a meal after an intense workout, you're slowing the repair process, not speeding it up. Hydrate first – that's why I use Oxylent – and let your cells plump back up with the proper mineral and fluid balance. Let as much HGH get into your system as possible, and THEN worry about what to consume food-wise.

Something else to consider: Your body is NOT actually absorbing all the protein that the nutrition label says you're consuming. We don't need as much protein as we think we do. Instead of worrying about how to get more, worry about how to absorb more. That's where digestive enzymes come in.

The smaller the particle of food, the easier to digest because it has more total surface area (relatively) for your stomach acid to touch than a much larger food particle. Digestive enzymes help to speed up the process of breaking down your food so they can be absorbed quicker and at a higher percentage. Plants are generally easier to break down because they don't require as low of pH stomach acid as meat does.

I've read quite a bit about digestive enzymes and haven't seen anything yet that makes me think a certain brand is so much better than another.

As such, protein powders are some of the most effective ways to increase your protein absorption, and taking digestive enzymes with them will

help even more. Interestingly, mixing pea and rice proteins together yield an amino acid combination somewhat close to human muscle. Meat eaters and vegetarians can both benefit from that knowledge.

In summary, eat a couple hours before your activity to allow proper digestion, focus on hydration afterwards instead of eating or protein supplementation, and go pick up some digestive enzymes to help your food break down more effectively and quicker. 🍷

*Russ Marchewka's commitment to better nutrition has earned him the nickname "Mr. Healthy" on the tour. He has spent the last eight years studying how nutrition affects his volleyball game. For more, visit his website, [WorldHealthHub.com](http://WorldHealthHub.com) or check out: [Instagram.com/WorldHealthHub](https://www.instagram.com/WorldHealthHub).*