**Supplements 101 – What Do You Really Need?**

**By Steve Long**

It seems like there is a dietary supplement for everything nowadays. If you listen to supplement companies they will tell you that you need to take about 15 different products to help you get everything you want out of life. A lot of those supplements are a scam, but some are great. You can’t take a supplement for everything so what do you really NEED? It is my goal in this article to tell you what are the essentials, why you might want to consider certain supplements, and which supplements are money down the toilet.

First of all, you can be assured that this article is written to help you. This is not written to sell supplements. I will not be mentioning any brand names or dropping any affiliate links in this article. That is a major problem with the information you receive about supplements. The info and research is typically from the company that is selling you a product. The goal of these companies is to sell supplements, and they will tell you almost anything to get you to buy a product. I’m here to bring you a little non-biased truth about what you really need and why.

Before I go into certain products I need you to realize that supplements are just that, a supplement to a well-balanced nutrition program. Never think that since you are taking supplements you will not need to eat healthy. Think of supplements like insurance. Hopefully you won’t need them, but just in case, you’re covered. With that being said here is your insurance policy.

**Multi Vitamin -** Your number one choice for your insurance policy is a multi vitamin. We’ve all heard about the importance of getting a wide variety of vitamins and minerals in our daily diet. In fact, it’s recommended to get roughly 5-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day to get enough of the quality vitamins and minerals that you need. Write down how many servings of fruits and veggies you eat per day for a week. If you are not averaging between 5-9 servings of fruits and veggies per day than a multi vitamin is a good choice for you.

**Essential Fatty Acid** – Essential fatty acids are fats that your body needs to function properly. EFA’s are not manufactured in your body and must be eaten. EFA’s are typically found in fish, certain oils, avocado, and some nuts. It’s been recommended that to get enough EFA’s you would need to eat 6 servings of fish each week. Once again, if that’s not something you can realistically do, you may want to supplement with a EFA supplement. Supplementing with EFA’s can also:

* Help Prevent Heart Disease
* Burn Fat
* Lower Bad Cholesterol
* Help with Symptoms of Arthritis
* Help Prevent Many Diseases Including Cancer
* Strengthen the Immune System

**Meal Replacement Shakes and Bars** – I’m not saying you should replace good quality meals with shakes and bars. Once again I feel these should be used to supplement a good meal plan, not replace one. However, how many times have you been in a situation where you are running little behind in the morning and don’t’ have to time to cook a quality breakfast? How many times has this lead to skipping breakfast altogether? This is the perfect situation for a meal replacement shake or bar. It’s not the best, but it’s a great plan B. This is much better than skipping a meal or getting fast food.

For many reasons, it is very important to get plenty of protein in your diet. A lot of people have a hard time reaching their protein needs. A good general guideline for protein needs is to divide your body weight by .80 and eat that many grams of protein spread evenly into 4-6 meals throughout the day. For example a 100-pound person would need 80 grams of protein and a 200-pound person would need 160 grams of protein. A typical meal replacement shake will have between 20-30 grams of protein so this is a great way to increase your protein intake. Also, if you are not eating 4-6 times per day, a meal replacement is a great way to add in a low calorie, high protein meal very easily.

Honestly, if your nutrition plan is perfect, you don’t actually NEED meal replacements. The fact is, no one is perfect, and even if you are trying I highly recommend keeping a good clean meal replacement around just in case.

**Post Workout Recovery Drink** - The best-kept secret most quality trainers know that most typical exercisers don’t is that proper post workout nutrition can dramatically increase results. I could go on for an entire article about proper protein to carbohydrate ratio, absorption quality, nutrient timing, protein synthesis, rate of recovery, and much more, but I’ll spare you the science and cut to the chase. It’s very important to get a specific meal in your body within around 30 minutes after your workout. I’ve worked with a lot of people that have a hard time eating directly after a workout. In fact, I am one of those people. A recovery drink is much easier to handle opposed to a solid meal after an intense workout.

Besides the fact that it’s hard to eat directly after a workout, it’s also been proven that your post workout meal is most effective the more easily digestible it is. A drink is the most absorbable meal possible, so a recovery drink meets those needs perfectly also.

The above supplements are what I consider your insurance policy. The necessities that will give you the most bang for your buck. There are other supplements out there that could benefit your specific needs that have not been mentioned. I think it would be best for a qualified professional to assess your specific needs for more detail.

Now that you have a good insurance plan, I have to mention that supplements like fat burners, appetite suppressants, fat blockers, carb blockers, muscle builders, etc are considered a scam by most real healthcare professionals and should be avoided at all costs. If it seems too good to be true it probably is. Do your research before you take anything and make sure that a supplement company has not done the research.

The truth is, the big 4 that I’ve listed above should be all that you need in most cases. This is your insurance plan that you will help keep you healthy as long as possible, get the most out of your workout efforts, and not waste money on the things that just plain do not work. So if you are responsible enough to have car or health insurance and care about being healthy, you must agree that this insurance policy is just as important. Sign up for your dietary supplement policy today and get on the road to optimal health and fitness.