

Nutrition for Body Builders: 10 “Superfoods” for Body Builders

Many inexperienced, sometimes even experienced, gym regulars believe that muscles grow while lifting weights. However lifting weights forms only a small fraction of the muscle building process. Muscle development takes place at night during deep sleep when the body synthesizes new cells with nutrients from our diet. Therefore nutrition forms a very important part of a bodybuilding program.

The body utilizes nutrients in food to perform daily metabolic and what's commonly referred to as the wear and tear processes. With bodybuilding, additional strain is put on the body to make new muscle tissues. Therefore the nutrient requirements also shoots up to stay with the demand. The best bodybuilding nutrition comes from a balanced intake of carbohydrates, adequate protein, vitamins, minerals, fats and large amounts of water. So if you are serious about getting lean and ripped it's time to say goodbye to mayo burgers, colas and other synthetic foods. Adopt eating habits imbibing fruits, whole grains, milk, eggs and fresh farm products.

How much protein do you need?

Your growing muscles need amino acids to create new tissues. The amino acids are provided by protein in diet. There is a lot of debate on the exact quantity of protein required in bodybuilding. The caution to maintain is that extreme amounts of protein in the diet can cause gastric and renal complications. Recent studies have suggested that a protein intake of 1 to 1.5 grams per unit of body weight is adequate to sustain the bodybuilding process. This means that the protein requirement of a 160 lb individual should be around 160 to 240 grams. To give an estimate of the amount involved consider the following: A 100 gm chicken breast has 22 grams of protein, a glass of milk has 8 grams, an egg approximately 6 grams and a slice bread 3 grams.

Lastly in bodybuilding it's not, the more the better. Rather it is the more precise the better. Don't over exert, eat balanced food and include plenty of rest. With everything good in life, patience, commitment, and balance will guarantee your success. With these tips in mind you are all set to pump iron! An exciting development in the functional food area is the fortified egg. Bodybuilders know that eggs are a good source of protein, but eggs can now also be a good source of omega-3 essential fatty acids. Some egg producers are adding flaxseed to the feed of hens. Adding omega-3 fatty acids, in the form of flaxseeds, to the diets of hens increases the omega-3 fatty acid content of eggs by over six times that of regular eggs. Eating two fortified eggs may provide an adequate amount of omega-3 fatty acids. Egg producers also add vitamin E to the flaxseed feed to keep it stable. This can cause the vitamin E content of fortified eggs to be as much as eight times higher than that of normal eggs. It is also worthy to note that eggs can taste better with the vitamin E enrichment.

Superfoods:

Legumes

Sometimes referred to as the poor man's meat, legumes are an excellent source of soluble fiber, which is important for keeping an athlete's blood sugar and energy levels stable. As far as plant foods go, most legumes are relatively high in protein and are a good source of slow releasing complex carbohydrates. This is great for providing a more stable and longer lasting supply of energy for working out. Legumes can be eaten in chili, stews, and soups, and are also enjoyable when served cold in bean salads. Some of the more common legumes found in the U.S. include pinto beans, kidney beans, navy beans, lima beans, black beans, chickpeas, lentils, and black-eyed peas. Legumes can be purchased dry, canned, and sometimes frozen.

Allium Vegetables

Allium vegetables, such as garlic, chives, onions, scallions, and leeks, are a flavorful way to add healthful nutrients to a bodybuilder's diet. The benefits of garlic and other allium vegetables may come from their abundant flavonoids, such as quercetin, and also from their sulfur-containing compounds. Allium vegetables may be more beneficial when uncooked. So you may want to add them to sandwiches, salads, salad dressings, and other raw recipes to get the most from them.

Mollusks

Low in fat, a source of protein, and high in essential minerals, mollusks can be a good addition to a bodybuilder's diet. Three popular and nutritious mollusk choices are clams, oysters, and mussels. Clams, in particular, lead the way for all foods in heme iron content. Heme iron-- found only in red meat, poultry, fish, and seafood-- is iron bound to a nonprotein compound that is much more easily absorbed by the body than free iron. Clams are also an excellent source of vitamin B12 and copper. These three nutrients may help maintain good blood status for delivering oxygen to working

muscles. Along with copper, mollusks are also rich in zinc and selenium. These minerals are necessary for the proper functioning of the body's immune system and its antioxidant defenses. Mollusks can be cooked in a variety of ways, including steaming, stewing, roasting, baking, broiling, sauteing, poaching, and frying.

Nuts

Nuts are a very rich source of nutrients, including polyunsaturated fatty acids, vegetable proteins, fiber, vitamin E, potassium, folate, magnesium, zinc, selenium, copper, phosphorous, phytosterols, antioxidants, and arginine. Although nuts are considered a fatty food, the fat in them may be beneficial. Some healthful choices for the bodybuilder include almonds, walnuts, Brazil nuts, cashews, hazelnuts, macadamia nuts, peanuts, pecans, pine nuts, and pistachios. But remember, eating too much of a good thing can really increase your caloric intake, which could lead to an increase in bodyfat. A good guideline may be to eat one or two servings per day. A serving is one ounce (24 almonds).

Whole Grains

Bodybuilders may find whole-grain foods helpful in providing steady energy for hard training. Whole-grain foods are rich in vitamins, minerals, fiber, and essential fatty acids. Some examples of good whole-grain foods include oatmeal, whole-wheat flour, barley, spelt, brown rice, and some hot and cold breakfast cereals. Be wary of products labeled 100% wheat, stone-ground, multi-grain, seven-grain, 12-grain, or organic. They often contain very little whole grain. Instead, look for whole-grain products that say 100% whole wheat.

Salmon

One of the best sources of omega-3 fatty acids, salmon is a great way to add more musclebuilding protein to your diet. Omega-3 essential fatty acids are important building blocks of cell membranes and, like protein, may help athletes recover from strenuous workouts. Omega-3 fatty acids are also a great addition to anyone's fat-loss plan.

Tomato Products

Not often do you find a natural food that actually benefits nutritionally by being cooked and processed. This seems to be the case, however, for tomatoes. It appears that even though some vitamin C is lost when tomatoes are heated, the antioxidant power is increased during the process. Researchers have found that the antioxidant lycopene, which is the pigment that makes tomatoes and other fruits like pink grapefruit and watermelon red, is made more bioavailable to the human body after heating. Foods rich in lycopene include canned tomatoes, tomato sauce, tomato juice, tomato paste, salsa, and ketchup.

Flaxseeds

Also known as linseeds, flaxseeds are small, oval-shaped seeds from the blue flowering flax plant. Flaxseeds are considered one of the best plant sources of healthful omega-3 essential fatty acids, and they're also a good source of fiber. Flaxseeds (but not all flaxseed oil) are rich in phytochemicals called lignans that may have strong antioxidant properties that can help you stay healthy. There are several sources of lignans, such as whole grains, various berries, and soybeans, but flaxseeds are the best source. For easier digestion, flaxseeds should be ground first; a coffee grinder is good for this. The pleasant, nutty flavor of ground flaxseeds can be enjoyed in many foods, such as baked breads, muffins, and cookies. They can also be eaten in salads, cereals, soups, sauces, or mixed with a serving of protein powder.

Cruciferous Vegetables

Vegetables such as watercress, broccoli, cauliflower, kale, brussels sprouts, and cabbage are known as cruciferous vegetables. These vegetables are high in fiber, rich in vitamin C, very low in calories, and a good source of healthful phytonutrients. Eating cruciferous vegetables is a good way to take in important micronutrients without taking in a lot of calories. Bodybuilders wishing to lose bodyfat will find cruciferous vegetables to be a good addition to a their focused diet. Try to get three or more servings of these vegetables each week.

It is also interesting to note that cruciferous vegetables can be a dieting bodybuilder's best friend, as in many cases they require more calories to be digested than they provide. Cruciferous vegetables not only help fill you up, but they also help you burn more calories!

Bodybuilders put great demand on their bodies during heavy training. Eating well will keep you going strong and staying healthy. Remember, a healthy

bodybuilder is a better bodybuilder, so try to add some of these superfoods today.

About the Author

Walter Zinsmeister III runs a Body Building website that provides body building workout plans, recipes and articles to keep the body in shape and healthy.

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