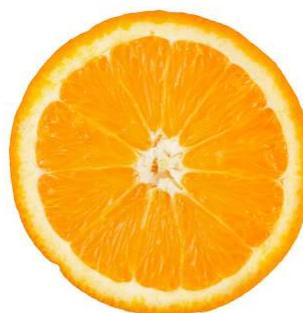


# Prep School Performance Nutrition News

with  
*Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, LDN*



(978) 697-2834

[www.lunchbox-nutritionist.com](http://www.lunchbox-nutritionist.com)

## Nutritionist. Speaker. Consultant.

October is here and it's the Halloween season! With that in mind, this month's issue of Prep School Performance News focuses on the potentially scary topic of protein supplements, the number one topic I am asked about. Today's student athletes are looking to be as big and strong as possible, and they are looking for the edge that media/advertising assures them will come with supplementation. The scary part is that supplements are loosely regulated, and that carries risks for our athletes. Read on for more details about helping teens to make good decisions about protein supplements.

– *Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, LD*

### Protein Supplements



Lean Mass Gainer, Optimum Nutrition, Designer Whey, Muscle Milk...there is a truly formidable array of protein supplements on the market these days! When I did a Google search of "build more muscle" the first article that came up had 3,453 "likes" AND an advertisement for whey protein powder. A search for "how can I bulk up?" yielded a long article AND the opportunity to buy a protein shake powder. Little wonder that our students are asking, "What's the best protein supplement?"

**Protein needs** are usually expressed in terms of body weight. Teens need to eat enough protein to meet their needs for growth in addition to any muscle building that they desire. The recommended protein intake for adolescent athletes is 0.8-0.9 grams per pound of body weight per day. So, for example, a 120# soccer player would need 96-108 grams of protein/day. Males are likely to be on the higher end of the range and

Could your students use some clarity about supplements? Would they like objective feedback about supplements they are using or considering? I offer small or large group sessions to explore the benefits and risks of supplements, with a "food first" focus. Contact Kathleen Searles, MS, RD, CSSD, LDN at 978-697-2834 or [ksearles@lunchbox-nutritionist.com](mailto:ksearles@lunchbox-nutritionist.com).

### To get about 15 grams of protein you could eat:



2 eggs  
½ cup of tuna  
A chicken thigh  
2 ounces of steak

females on the lower. Typically, teen-agers are easily able to get plenty of protein from their food choices (see sidebar.)

**Protein supplements** can range from simple food products such as instant breakfast mixes to elaborate compounds with many ingredients. To find a “safe” product, Susan Kundrat, MS, RD, CSSD of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee suggests choosing protein products that are marketed as foods and which have a nutrition facts label. The milk proteins whey and casein are common protein sources. Soy, rice, and hemp protein powders are options for vegetarians.

**Recovery snacks** should include a good source of protein. The amino acids which make up protein are used to build and repair muscle tissue following practices or workouts. The branched chain amino acids (leucine, isoleucine, and valine) are particularly important to muscle protein synthesis. Whey protein, which is high in leucine, has been demonstrated to be effective for increasing muscle mass. Milk is a natural source of whey protein, and is a convenient and inexpensive recovery beverage. (Chocolate milk is considered even better because of the additional carbohydrate.) Typically, a recovery snack should contain about 20 grams of protein.

**Good candidates for protein supplementation** are athletes who want to gain weight or those who are having difficulty eating enough. Some athletes don’t do well with solid food well near the time of competition/practice, and a protein shake might be easier to tolerate. Protein supplements can also be helpful for athletes who do not have time to prepare or eat high protein foods or who do not like common food sources of protein.

**Athletes who should be cautious about protein supplementation** are those who need to control their weight. Many of the protein drinks are high in calories and could undermine weight control efforts. There are unflavored and unsweetened protein powders that would be best for these athletes if needed. Athletes who have any kidney or liver disease should not use supplemental protein without medical supervision.

**“What’s the best protein supplement?”** In general, protein supplements can be safe and effective. To help your individual student athletes evaluate a product, here are some questions to consider:

- What is the athlete’s performance goal? (increased strength, increased weight, improved appearance)
- Is the athlete eating enough calories? (essential to use protein for muscle growth)
- Can the athlete participate in a resistance training program? (necessary to increase muscle mass)
- Is the student physically developmentally ready to try to increase muscle mass?
- How much does the supplement cost?
- Is the supplement “clean” and safe? (free of unwanted substances)

2 cups of milk  
1 cup of cooked beans or lentils  
2 cups cooked quinoa  
6 oz. Greek yogurt

### **Guidelines for Supplement Use**

#### **Buyer Beware!!**

Supplements are not regulated like medicines, and may or may not contain what the label says. Look for NSF, Consumer Lab, or Informed Choice certification.

Any supplement should be both safe and effective.

The American College of Sports Medicine does not recommend supplements for athletes under the age of 18.

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