

Wellness Living & Travel

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DRIVE-TO WELLNESS

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THE LATEST SUPPLEMENTS

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Boost Your Body

The latest on supplements for fitness recovery, heart health and cognitive function

By Abbie Kozolchyk

In an ideal wellness world, you would—no doubt—meet your every nutritional need by eating the proverbial rainbow, each color band a bottomless buffet of health-boosting whole foods. In real life, however, to-do lists don't always allow for, say, "chopping and eating 30 different vegetables a week," says Elizabeth Bradley, MD, medical director of the Center for Functional Medicine at the Cleveland Clinic. So even the most diet-dedicated among us—from impassioned vegans to accomplished athletes—can wind up with nutrient deficits. And that, say experts, is where over-the-counter supplements come in. →





“There are actually cases when food alone won’t do the trick,” adds Dr. Bradley. For example, “some people have continually high homocysteine levels [a risk factor for heart disease] from a genetic defect in their enzymes, and need supplements like vitamin B12 and folate.”

Of course, you don’t have to be at risk for disease to want to optimize your heart health. Nor do you have to be struggling mightily in the areas of fitness recovery and cognitive function to want to improve both. In fact, these are some of the most common concerns that experts are addressing with supplements—or with a single super-supplement, as the case may be.

“All three areas are critically dependent on energy production,” explains **Jacob Teitelbaum, MD**, an internist, integrative medicine luminary and best-selling author. “If you have a mild energy crisis, you may simply have difficulty recovering after workouts. But heart problems can arise from a localized problem of energy production—and loss of cognitive function can come from decreased energy in brain cells.”

Ribose—which your body produces naturally but not always so easily—helps drive energy production, says Dr. Teitelbaum. And research has shown that supplementing this sugar can stimulate energy recovery, with one recent study finding an average increase of 45 percent over three weeks. (Thus, Dr. Teitelbaum’s new ribose-based Smart Energy System.)

Other supplements that may help on all three fronts? CoQ10 (also critical for energy production), magnesium (an enzyme building block), ginger (a circulation superstar)—and indirectly, fermented foods (“these improve your gut biome, which can then improve everything else,” notes Dr. Bradley).

But given the ever-expanding world of supplements, you may want to address these concerns individually. So read on for top picks in each category, then check in with your own naturopathic doctor—or another trusted provider who’s versed in natural medicine—before you embark on a new regimen. You want someone who can guide you toward meticulously formulated therapeutic doses (“subtherapeutic” doses abound, warn pros)—and away from anything that may be contraindicated.

To improve cognitive function

B Vitamins

"These should be right at the top," says Dr. Teitelbaum, noting that folate, in particular, can help prevent cognitive decline and depression.

Try: Frunutta B12, frunutta.com; NOW Foods Brain Attention, nowfoods.com; Solgar Folate, thevitaminshoppe.com

Lion's Mane

A favorite of master herbalist and supplement formulator Paul Schulick, cofounder, For The Biome—among many other pros—this mushroom is also believed to fight cognitive decline, and possibly anxiety and depression as well.

Try: Four Sigmatic Lion's Mane Elixir, us.foursigmatic.com; Gaia Herbs Mind Spring, gaiaherbs.com

Ashwagandha

This is another botanical that is reported to fight stress (for starters)—and "when we have a positive effect on stress, we have a positive effect on our ability to concentrate and focus," says David Foreman RPh, the traditional pharmacist turned herbal pharmacist and supplement formulator. (Note that while Ashwagandha may have fallen from grace in certain circles because of reported overgrowing and lost potency, good formulations are still out there. "This is a case where brand really matters," says Dr. Teitelbaum. "KSM-66 is the only one I'll use.")

Try: Bare Organics Ashwagandha Root Powder, bareorganics.com; Organic India Ashwagandha supplements, organicindiausa.com; Physician's Choice KSM-66 Ashwagandha, physicianschoice.com

Curcumin

Though the active compound in turmeric is said to affect far more than your brain (your heart may be a beneficiary, too), the anti-inflammatory properties may be particularly good at preventing cognitive decline and bolstering memory, notes Dr. Bradley.

Try: Bare Organics Turmeric Root, bareorganics.com; Nordic Naturals Curcumin Gummies, nordicnaturals.com; Terry Naturally CuraMed Superior Absorption Curcumin, pharmaca.com

Citicoline

This naturally occurring brain chemical—another go-to supplement at Cleveland Clinic—helps shore up the structural components of the synapse, explains Dr. Bradley. Used to treat everything from mild impairment to stroke, citicoline also influences your neurotransmitters, adds Foreman.

Try: NOW Foods Brain Elevate, nowfoods.com; Metagenics Brain Vitale Capsules, shop.drhyman.com



Ashwagandha

To boost post-workout recovery

Whey Protein

These easy-to-absorb dairy proteins quickly hit your bloodstream—and in turn your muscles—where the amino acids go to work repairing tiny, exercise-induced fissures. “We combine whey protein with a high-quality carb to help replenish glycogen,” says Dr. Bradley.

Try: Garden of Life Grass Fed Organic Whey Protein, gardenoflife.com; tera’swhey Organic Whey Protein, simplyteras.com; Pharmaca Grass-Fed Whey Protein Powder, pharmaca.com

Vitamin D

The molecular biology gets a bit complex here (think nuclear receptors and gene transcription), but the bottom line is that vitamin D has short- and long-term muscle-repair and -building benefits. One caveat, as Dr. Teitelbaum notes, is that dosing can be especially confusing, and you may want to take a calcitriol test to find your own sweet spot.

Try: Frunutta Vitamin D3, frunutta.com; Hum Nutrition Here Comes the Sun, humnutrition.com

Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide

Better known as NAD, this coenzyme is another post-workout muscle repair agent (and a key to your cells’ energy production). “Tru Niagen is a company we use that has a lot of research to support NAD,” says Dr. Bradley.

Try: Tru Niagen supplements, truniagen.com

Electrolytes

Sodium, chloride, magnesium and other essential elements—collectively known as electrolytes—serve as fluid regulators in your body, and if you lose enough of them through a sweaty workout, you’ll want to replenish them (and thereby help yourself rehydrate) with a supplemental version. Dr. Bradley likes LyteShow as much for what you won’t find (unnecessary additives) as what you will: magnesium, sodium, chloride and potassium.

Try: Nuun Sport Tri-Berry Tablets, pharmaca.com; Garden of Life Organic Plant-Based Recovery, gardenoflife.com; LyteShow Electrolyte Concentration, lyteshow.com



To improve heart health

Reishi mushroom

Used for medicinal purposes in Asia for millennia, Reishi is getting ever more attention in the context of heart health, according to Schulick, who notes the mushroom's ability to help lower blood pressure and support immune functioning. "In terms of a supplement, I'd vote for one that gives you the whole mushroom," he says.

Try: Four Sigmatic Mushroom Blend Mix, us.foursigmatic.com; Gaia Herbs Mushroom + Herbs Everyday Immune, gaiaherbs.com; Now Foods Immune Renew, nowfoods.com; Om Immune Defense Powered by Reishi + Vitamin C, ommushrooms.com

Barberine

Isolated from the Chinese goldthread plant—a staple of Eastern medicine for millennia—this alkaloid has gained ground in the West among cardiovascular researchers. "Barberine can help with insulin sensitivity and indirectly, your triglycerides," says Dr. Bradley.

Try: Integrative Therapeutics Berberine, pharmaca.com; Zhou Berberine with Oregon Grape, zhounutrition.com

Cistus Incanus

Native to the Balkans, this new-to-the-U.S. herb is proving extremely helpful to cardiovascular health, says Schulick, who is formulating a Cistus Incanus product to be released soon. "Reputed to be Europe's most polyphenol-rich plant, Cistus Incanus would also be helpful for post-workout recovery," he adds.

Try: For The Biome Cistus Incanus, forthebiome.com; Biokoma Cistus Rock Rose Cistus Incanus Tea, biokoma.com

Phytosterols

These plant-derived compounds are chemically similar to cholesterol and compete with it for absorption into your bloodstream. And that blocked absorption can translate to lower blood cholesterol levels (one reason the Cleveland Clinic may recommend Meta-Sitosterol to patients with high cholesterol).

Try: Metagenics Meta-Sitosterol 2.0, store.drhyman.com



Reishi mushroom