

What to Look for in Protein Powders

By Henry Toraño

Many of you may already be aware of the fact that we are no longer carrying Revive Rx products. While we absolutely loved Revive for its quality and taste, they are unfortunately out of business. I was made privy to this information a few months back, which prompted me to commence a new search to find a suitable replacement to have available for our clients. Many of you were surprised that I didn't have an immediate answer to this issue. This got me thinking that it is not common knowledge what one should look for in supplements, particularly protein powders. So I thought I should take the time to discuss some of the things that I look for in protein drinks.

Protein Quality

It may come as a surprise to some that protein isn't "just" protein. There's several different types, even though the vast majority of powders are derived from cow's milk. The protein in cow's milk is approximately 80% Casein and 20% Whey. Casein is the more solid part of milk (yes, there's such a thing, as in curds) while protein is the part that remains liquid. We could go way deeper into casein, as there is a camp who believes its highly beneficial. While I don't personally agree with this theory, I'll leave that for another time. Usually, protein mixes that are used in sports and fitness are whey protein powders. And even then, there's several types. Actually, we could say that that there's three: Whey Hydrolysate, Whey Concentrate, and Whey Isolate. The difference between these is in processing.

I gave Hydrolysate an honorary mention, even though it's really more a marketing gimmick than anything else. It's referred to as a pre-digested form of whey that makes it very easy for the body to process. The thing is, all whey is fairly easily digested so even if there's truth to this statement, the benefits over the other two would be negligible. Of course, this comes with a catch: Hydrolysate products are insanely overpriced. Hence, you pay for the fancy name. The two big players are Concentrate and Isolate. Again, the difference is in the way that they're processed. These methods are really not all that important in this discussion, but the results are. See the table below, which I've pulled from an article in Healthline:

	Whey Isolate	Whey Concentrate
Processing	More	Less
Protein	23 grams	18 grams
Carbs	1 gram	3.5 grams
Fat	0 grams	1.5 grams
Lactose	Up to 1 gram	Up to 3.5 grams
Cost	Higher	Lower

These are all based on 100 calorie servings.

As you can see, Whey Isolate undergoes a more thorough process which results in higher protein content, less carbs, less fat, and very little amounts of lactose. Is this even important? HIGHLY!!!!

65% of the human population has some degree of intolerance to lactose. This effect is magnified when you consider that one of the main uses for protein powder is post workout, when you're digestive system is not at its peak. Hence, we prefer more highly processed protein and low lactose level to facilitate this process. Also, we want as much protein grammage as possible in the fewest amount of calories to reduce digestive load. Whey Protein Isolate is superior to Whey Protein Concentrate in both of these fronts. It is also the reason why it's more expensive.

Ingredients List

A general rule of thumb in most respectable nutrition plans is to consume as much real food as possible. In cases when you should decide to consume packaged foods, it is advisable to look at the ingredients list to get an idea of how "real" it really is. Simply put, the LESS ingredients listed, the better. One important consideration when looking at ingredients is that by law, manufacturers must list the items in descending order of content in that particular food. In other words, whatever is listed first is most abundant. Whatever is listed last is least abundant. Let's take a look at two different protein powders. I won't try to analyze all powders available in the market, but will rather look at 1st Phorm's Phormula 1 Naturals (which we're currently carrying) and Dymatize ISO 100 which has been around for years and has gained a lot of popularity because it's the one that Costco sells:

Phormula 1

Iso 100

CHOCOLATE

Supplement Facts		
Serving size 1 scoop (28g)		
Servings Per Container 32		
	Amount per serving	% Daily Value
Calories	100	
Total Fat	0.5 g	1%*
Total Carbohydrate	3 g	1%*
Total Sugars	1 g	**
Protein	21 g	42%*
Calcium	113 mg	9%
Sodium	100 mg	4%
Potassium	174 mg	4%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.		
**Daily Value not established.		

INGREDIENTS: Low Temperature Processed Whey Protein Isolate, Cocoa, Natural Flavor, Soy Lecithin, Guar Gum, Salt, Stevia.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size: 1 Scoop (32g)
 Servings Per Container: About 43

Amount Per Serving	
Calories 120	Calories from Fat 5
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0.5g	1%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 10mg	3%
Sodium 190mg	8%
Potassium 230mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 2g	1%
Dietary Fiber <1g	4%
Sugars <1g	
Protein 25g	50%
Vitamin A 0%	• Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 10%	• Iron 6%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Potassium		3,500mg	3,500mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Protein		50g	65g

Calories per gram:
 Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

INGREDIENTS: HYDROLYZED WHEY PROTEIN ISOLATE, WHEY PROTEIN ISOLATE, COCOA POWDER (PROCESSED WITH ALKALI), NATURAL AND ARTIFICIAL FLAVORS, SALT, SOY LECITHIN, POTASSIUM CHLORIDE, SUCRALOSE, STEVIOL GLYCOSIDES (STEVIA), CONTAINS MILK AND SOY

These both reflect the ingredients in the chocolate versions of each brand. As you can see, they both use Whey Isolate as the protein source. They are both relatively low in total ingredients, although Iso100 has a few more. When we look at quality, we can get a little more nitpicky. Note that Phormula 1 contains natural flavor, while Iso 100 contains both natural and artificial flavors. They both contain soy lecithin which is an emulsifier frequently used in products like this over oil sources to manage costs. Both brands use salt, Iso 100 also uses Potassium Chloride, which shares similar properties to salt, at a cheaper price. Both brands use stevia as a sweetener, which we want, but Iso 100 also uses sucralose, and artificial sweetener. In summary, Iso 100 is an ok option, Phormula 1 is better. Again, it's very important to remember that I'm only talking about the Chocolate flavor here. If you were looking for the

best tasting option, and look at the ingredients lists on First Phorm's "Ice Cream Sandwich" or Dymatize's "Birthday Cake" flavors, you'll see that the ingredients list is much longer, hence not as clean.

So, that's the scoop on the things that I look for when looking at options for protein powders. The first thing I consider is the type of protein, looking for Whey Protein Isolate. After that, I go down to the ingredients list and look at two things: amount of ingredients and what they are, always on the lookout for what sweetener is used. The preferred choice, nowadays, is Stevia. Hopefully, this guide will come in handy when you're in the market for a new protein powder.