

BCAA vs Protein Checklist

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1. Three-day protein food log

Day	Breakfast protein	Lunch protein	Dinner protein	Snacks
1				
2				
3				

Protein foods with all nine essential amino acids: meat, poultry, fish, eggs, dairy, whey, soy. Beans, lentils, grains, nuts and seeds work best in variety.

2. BCAAs vs complete protein

	BCAA supplement	Complete protein (food or powder)
Essential amino acids	3 of 9	All 9
Builds muscle with training	Not on its own	Yes
Research niche	Soreness in trained people (limited evidence)	The foundation for everyone

3. Do not use BCAAs without your doctor if...

- ☐ You have ALS (linked to lung failure and higher death rates) ☐ You have maple syrup urine disease
- ☐ You have liver or kidney disease, or drink heavily ☐ You are pregnant or breastfeeding
- ☐ You take levodopa, diabetes medicines, corticosteroids or thyroid hormone ☐ You have surgery coming up

4. Label check

- ☐ Leucine, isoleucine and valine amounts listed (no proprietary blend) ☐ No hidden caffeine or stimulants
- ☐ Third-party seal confirmed on the program website (NSF Certified for Sport for tested athletes)
- ☐ No claims like "anabolic", "fat-burning" or "muscle-sparing"

5. Questions for my doctor, dietitian or pharmacist

- ☐ Am I already getting enough protein from food? ☐ Would a complete protein be a better fit than BCAAs?
- ☐ Is any amino acid product safe with my medicines and health conditions?
- Seek urgent care for severe muscle pain with dark urine or weakness. Report side effects to the FDA: 1-800-FDA-1088.