

Ergogenic Aids

Every year more and more Americans consume some kind of ergogenic aid to assist them in their fitness goals. An ergogenic aid is generally recognized as some kind external aid to help you achieve your health related goals. These goals can range from weight loss to increase of energy, to weight gain, and there are many nutritionally related ergogenic aids on the market to assist in any number of these goals.

Some of these products have stood the scrutiny of both time and science and have shown to be both effective and harmless provided they are taken according to directions.

One such popular product is creatine. Creatine, a naturally occurring element within our bodies, has been touted as a successful aid in helping athletes achieve greater muscle mass. This is achieved by providing the body with a greater volume of creatine within the muscles allowing the athlete more endurance when performing anaerobic exercises such as weight lifting. This extra energy in the muscles simply allows the athlete to increase the amount of reps they are performing therefore allowing for greater results in muscle hypertrophy..a fancy word for strength or increase in muscle size. I have personally seen terrific results with creatine and the many studies conducted on this product continue to reinforce its efficacy.

A group of products that you should exercise great caution in consuming are the central nervous system stimulants such as ephedera and even caffeine. These products are generally sold as weight loss products. They include a host of other herbs, vitamins, and amino acids, and the rationale is that they increase your metabolism. The question remains...at what expense. Lets take a little ride through the body and see what occurs when one consumes these products. The first thing that occurs is an almost immediate increase in energy. This is because you have flooded your body with products that have over stimulated your adrenal glands forcing adrenaline, nor epinephrine and a host of other excitotoxins throughout your body. Yes this will increase your energy and your metabolism, but overtime you are doing this at the expense of wearing down your adrenal glands. Simply put, your energy throughout the day should be the result of the natural breakdown of macronutrients such as fat, protein, and carbohydrates. Your energy should not come as a result of chemically over stimulating your body's central nervous system. Over time your adrenal glands and other essential organs will need more and more of these stimulants in order to feel normal levels of energy.

It was fairly recently when a trainer in NYC suggested a product containing ephedera to a woman who had a pre existing heart problem. The product over stimulated her already weak heart, inducing a heart attack and eventually death. Eating a well balanced diet throughout the day will assist in both a steady metabolism and steady energy levels.

Another popular ergogenic myth is the need for extra protein to gain muscle. Yes, muscle is comprised of amino acids, the building blocks of protein, but there is no conclusive evidence that consuming large amounts of protein will build more muscle mass. The simple truth is that when you consume protein the body breaks it down into its component parts, amino acids, and these amino acids are used where they are most needed, whether to grow hair, repair muscle, or build hormones. Muscles do not receive preferential treatment over other organs of the body. On the other hand do not expect to eat only salads and expect muscle growth. You do need protein to sustain muscle but you do not need excessive amounts to get the job done.

When it comes to ergogenic aids, many of these items are not approved by the FDA but may fall in the Generally Regarded as Safe (GRAS) category. Not approved by the FDA means the claims are subject to be misleading and the standards by which these products are created not necessarily monitored either. This means actual contents may vary from batch to batch and the purity of the product may vary from batch to batch also.

The bottom line is to be aware of products that promise quick muscle growth or even quick weight loss. The body does not naturally grow muscle quickly nor does it naturally gain weight quickly. Therefore the only way a product can achieve these results is by violently over stimulating the body's central nervous system, which in turn over stimulates the body's metabolism which may eventually lead to problems such as exhausted adrenal glands and other health maladies.