

Please Take One!



SUPPLEMENT OF THE MONTH: BCAAs

What are BCAAs and where are they found?

BCAAs stand for branched-chain amino acids, which include the amino acids leucine, isoleucine and valine. These amino acids are essential nutrients found in proteins, such as meat, dairy and legumes. They are considered “branched-chain” because of their chemical structure. BCAAs appear to stimulate protein synthesis and reduce muscle breakdown. They are unique because they are the only amino acids used directly by the muscle for energy during exercise, and therefore, they can be depleted quickly.

What are the benefits?

BCAAs are used to improve exercise performance and reduce the breakdown of muscles during intense exercise. They are also used to prevent fatigue, decrease muscle soreness, improve concentration, and to treat various medical conditions, such as anorexia, cancer, liver disease, mania, ALS, McArdle’s Disease, spinocerebellar degeneration, tardive dyskinesia, and kidney failure in elderly patients.

Are there interactions with food, medications or herbal supplement?

BCAAs may interact with diabetes medications because they may decrease blood sugar. They also may interact with Levodopa, steroids, and diazoxide. Consult a physician when taking any of these medications before starting BCAAs.

Are there side effects?

BCAAs have few side effects; sometimes they may cause fatigue or loss of coordination. Consult a doctor before taking BCAAs if you are pregnant, have ALS, or chronic alcoholism. BCAAs should be stopped 2 weeks prior to any scheduled surgery.