

Natural Botanicals For Maximum Muscle

Contributed by Carlon M. Colker, M.D., FACN
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Put a 20-oz. ribeye steak in front of a hungry bodybuilder and he'll go through it like ex-lax™ through a sick cat. Add some carefully rationed grilled chicken breasts, a few containers of wild rice, some protein shakes and a jug of distilled water to schlep around and he'll be in heaven. This all-too-familiar scenario has been the cornerstone of the serious muscle builder for many generations of competitors.

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Admittedly, while this high protein, low simple-carbohydrate approach has stood the test of time in terms of building slabs of lean mass, it has classically been bereft of critical phytonutrients. There's a reason: bodybuilders have traditionally believed that ingesting natural greens is pointless. Since they do not contain a wealth of amino acids, they don't count as protein. They don't contain much in the way of carbohydrates, so they don't fill you up. And since bodybuilders tend to take loads of vitamin supplements, they don't see the benefit because they figure they are getting everything they need from the pills they are taking. With the exception of the occasional salad, phytonutrients have long since fallen out of favor with the traditional bodybuilder.

The truth is that this classification of green nutrient contains massive amounts of naturally-occurring minerals, trace minerals, ultra-trace minerals and rare earth minerals, which can only be found in natural greens. Research shows that the standard minerals are critical for growth, recovery and testosterone production (like iron and zinc)- but science has examined very little beyond the obvious.

The subclassifications of trace and ultra-trace elements have been left virtually unexamined and thus are completely overlooked by many nutrient scientists. Not only do these elements remain a mystery, the names are even difficult to pronounce. Hafnium, thorium, dysprosium and antimony are just a few and there are so many more. We don't see them often because you can't mine the stuff efficiently and encapsulate it- plus we have no idea what they would do to the body in that form. So, for now, these vital and mysterious nutrients remain in our food supply, but are largely undiscovered and ignored in terms of importance, even though many of them have been shown to be essential in the diet for various animal, plant and microbial species. But since we have little or no evidence of their 'essentiality' in humans, scientists are very quick to reject a more careful study of these mysterious elements.

In my estimation, they are profoundly interesting. The fact that few of us eat enough roughage and that as a society we

are quite sickly, is proof positive that something is missing. While they are certainly not the only focus, natural green botanicals are an obvious first stopping point. These plant-derived minerals strengthen body cells and repair damage. As the increased breakdown of calories from dieting, stress and training overwhelm the healing process, the body requires nutrients that transcend the traditional macronutrients, standard vitamins and basic minerals. When this happens, the essential nutrients in high-quality protein and leafy greens can be the missing link in getting past plateaus and spurring stubborn muscles to start growing again.

A good example is organic spinach. Loaded with fiber nutrients like chlorophyll, folate, manganese, calcium, iron, iodine, magnesium and phosphorus, the nutrients found in organic spinach have been directly linked to fighting cancers such as ovarian, prostate and colon. Naturally-occurring nutrients in organic spinach reverse age-related cell breakdown and are critical in anti-aging and boosting overall health.

Organic broccoli sprout seeds are another example of a natural green phytonutrient, containing minerals such as calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, zinc, sulforaphane and indoles (critical in fighting cancer), as well as numerous trace and ultra-trace minerals. There's also organic alfalfa leaf; this green phytonutrient is rich in minerals and contains over 300 nutrients.

I could go on, but I trust you get the point. Of course, despite my impassioned plea, I don't expect that everyone reading this will make organic greens part of their dietary routine. The sad fact is that phytonutrients are not included often enough in the typical diet and bodybuilders are particularly negligent when it comes to this aspect of nutrition. This is unhealthy because the traditional bodybuilding diet is so heavy in protein and so relatively light in other macronutrient categories that symptoms such as constipation often result.

Bodybuilding foods tend to be bland and while oatmeal and brown rice find a way in, they have little or no green roughage. They tend to avoid leafy greens and even those who don't mean to or don't think they do, still are lucky to have one or two salads a week. Fiber is the natural cure for the bodybuilding diet; it balances gastronomic affliction by offsetting the large amounts of protein coming in, while enhancing health and wellness. Many of us know this already or at least can sense it in our bodies. Through trial and error, bodybuilders tend to be exquisitely sensitive to what is going on in the body- yet here again is the void.

As is so often the case, a dietary supplement comes to the rescue. This time I'm not just talking about some grassy liquid or tasteless powder that offers nothing else from a bodybuilding standpoint and serves only to clutter the landscape. I'm not interested in adding yet another product to your overcrowded countertop of dietary supplements.

That said, I actually found a little company with a super green blend made by a bodybuilder who I actually helped out

early in his competitive career. Adam Levine's new product is called Rxodus™- a combination of whey protein and a botanical blend. Rxodus™ marries pure whey protein isolate with real organic greens; in other words, you get your protein plus your greens and fiber in one damn good-tasting shake! His drink has no sugar, lactose or gluten, which means no gas or bloating. Rxodus™ also has a low-carbohydrate (7 grams of carbohydrate per serving, 6 of them natural fiber) and low-calorie profile, which makes it ideal for putting on muscle and not fat. I tried the chocolate first but there's also a vanilla that actually mixes up a tinge green from the veggies, but tastes phenomenal- which means a great deal coming from me, because I usually can't stand vanilla!

I guess I should say that I have no financial interest whatsoever in the product and Adam has not paid me to endorse it- it's just the truth. That's saying quite a bit because my office fills with crap on a weekly basis sent to me from every corner of the world of health and fitness, in the hopes that I might like the stuff enough to write about it or give it to one of the celebrities or athletes I work with. I swear I get sent everything to try from protein drinks and protein bars, to special food samples, so-called miracle dietary supplements, medicinal patches and gels, fat-burning bread, testosterone-boosting dried superfruits, beauty rejuvenators, magic machines, latest-greatest exercise pieces, fitness videotapes with the newest Billy Blanks look-alike, organic hot sauce, religious water with special healing powers, etc. Get the picture? It can be hilarious at times, but also annoying.

When I was on ABC's "Shaq's Big Challenge" every week, things got so nuts I was having my assistant and the director of our Greenwich center go through the pile of stuff at the door and turn away as much as possible. It's not quite as crazy now, but the hauls still come in. I'd say 80 percent of it is garbage and ends up appropriately deposited by our cleaning staff in the dumpster downstairs, along with other silly and worthless means and methods that have little or no effectiveness, credibility and/or usability.

As an aside, I really hate it when someone I know or a friend sends me crap at this level. I hate breaking the news to them that whatever they are hawking or have an interest in actually sucks. But it is what it is and I sometimes end up hurting feelings. That said, another 15 percent ends up having some utility but are still not realistic and/or workable enough for me to do anything with. They tend to end up in the hands of my staff.

This week, one of my physician colleagues took home a case of energy drinks with some strange ingredients and an equally bizarre name, while one of our physical therapists was lucky enough to bring home some organic pet treats for depressed dogs. Care for a treat? Well, at least they didn't go to waste. The last 5 percent is usually the stuff that warrants a second look by yours truly. In the case of Rxodus,™ it got more than a few looks from me. Someone finally came out with a bodybuilding product that allows us to get the organic green fiber nutrients we need in our diet in a way that conforms to what we are familiar with. You can check out the product at www.rxodus.com or call 1-800-901-9396 to learn more.

800-310-1555 or ordering the book online at www.prosource.net.