Whey vs. Soy Protein: Which is better?
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Introduction
Protein supplements are being used every day by people both old and young (Campbell, 2007). Most of these people are avid exercisers who are working out and tearing their muscles apart on a daily basis. Protein is what helps the body build its muscles back together and, therefore, has a major role in making the human body stronger. Extensive research shows that people who exercise regularly need additional amounts of protein (Campbell, 2007). People taking protein supplements want to know what the best protein available is. They want to know what works the best, what works the quickest, what has the largest fat-burning impact, and what tastes the best.

Soy and Whey Protein Basics
Soy proteins and whey proteins are competitors. People, especially people who are new to taking muscle-building supplements, have wondered for years which one is better for their individual workout needs and what the difference is between the two. Soy protein is taken from soybeans and contains a high amount of amino acids. It has been found to lower cholesterol, fight heart disease, and speed up metabolism of the thyroid helping the body become leaner (Olon, 2007).

Whey protein is taken from milk as a diluted byproduct of cheese. It has been shown to be antibacterial, assist in maintaining correct body weight, regulate blood pressure, improve the immune system, and improve the digestive system’s efficiency (Olon, 2007).

Best Protein to Buy
Both soy protein and whey protein will help the body build muscle. The question is, “Which protein will have the most additional benefits?” In a study by Nilsson, Holst, and Björck, a mixture of amino acids showed almost identical effects to those of whey protein. Soy protein is naturally high in amino acids which resemble the effects of whey protein.

In a study by Brown, DiSilvestro, and Devor, two groups were given whey and soy proteins. The groups were both given the same exercise routines. At the end of the study, the group who took the whey protein and the group who took the soy protein both showed improvements in lean body mass. The lean body mass results are shown in Figure 1. The only difference in the two groups was that the group who ingested the soy protein showed avoidance to two negative effects that the whey protein group suffered. The negative effect was that “plasma radical scavenging capacities fell in the whey and training alone groups, while the myeloperoxidase values rose” (Brown, DiSilvestro, & Devor, 2004, p.3).
Whey Protein Benefits

Whey protein has shown to help in losing body fat and increasing lean muscle mass (Frestedt, Zenk, Kuskowski, Ward, & Bastian, 2008). In a study of obese men and women, conducted by Frestedt, Zenk, Kuskowski, Ward, and Bastian, groups were given a high whey protein, ready-to-mix beverage to drink daily. At the end of the study, the results showed that the subjects had lost a significant amount of body fat without losing lean body mass (Frestedt, Zenk, Kuskowski, Ward, & Bastian, 2008). Lean muscle is important in keeping the body strong.

Soy Protein and Bone Formation

Soy has been thought to reduce the risk of osteoporosis in post-menopausal women. In a study by Arjmandi, female subjects were chosen to consume either foods containing soy protein or control foods over a year. The women all had similar body types. At the end of the study, the results showed that the soy protein had a small effect on bone mass density. It increased bone mass density, but the increase was not significant (Arjmandi, 2005). This study seemed to show that soy protein does not reduce the risk of osteoporosis in women.

Conclusion

To stay in shape and build lean body mass, protein is a necessity. Whey protein and soy protein both have advantages and both ultimately do their job of rebuilding torn muscles. Whey and soy proteins seem to have similar characteristics, but soy has a few added benefits. Soy has amino acids which seem to mimic the effects of whey proteins. Soy protein also reduces the risk of heart disease. Whey protein reduces body fat while sustaining lean body mass. When choosing which protein to use, figure out which properties are more important to specific exercise goals.

Audience

This research would be of interest to exercisers who are trying or are planning to try to add lean muscle mass to their bodies, food scientists, nutritionists, and medical doctors.

References


