

Alert: Protein drinks

You don't need the extra protein or the heavy metals our tests found

<http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/magazine-archive/2010/july/food/protein-drinks/overview/index.htm?loginMethod=auto>

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Test results

EAS Myoplex Original Rich Dark Chocolate and Muscle Milk Chocolate and Vanilla Crème can expose users to elevated levels of heavy metals when they consume three servings a day.

The promises are enticing. Whether you're looking to shed unwanted pounds, get a quick energy jolt, build muscles, or fight the aging process, protein drinks are being boosted by some supplement makers as a scientifically proven way to quickly achieve your goals.

The products, sold as ready-to-drink liquids or powders that you mix with milk, juice, or water to make shakes, attract not just athletes and body-builders but also baby boomers, pregnant women, and teenagers looking for a shortcut to a buff body.

Some ads say that protein supplements, in flavors such as strawberry and vanilla cream, can be a nutritious and time-saving snack or meal replacement.

Marketing for Energy First Pro Energy Whey Protein Isolate says the protein supplement is "ideal" for pregnant women and growing children, and also offers this promise for aging adults who use it: "You will rarely if ever be sick and you will begin to look and feel years younger."

In a testimonial for BSN Lean Dessert Protein Shake, "fitness celebrity" Jennifer Nicole Lee says, "Being a busy mom with 12-hour workdays, I rely upon my Lean Dessert Protein to get adequate amounts of protein without wasting time on creating complex meals"

Another product, Muscle Milk, boasts on its website: "Designed after one of nature's most balanced foods: human mother's milk"

But our investigation, including tests at an outside laboratory of 15 protein drinks, a review of government documents, and interviews with health and fitness experts and consumers, found most people already get enough protein, and there are far better and cheaper ways to add more if it's needed. Some protein drinks can even pose health risks, including exposure to potentially harmful heavy metals, if consumed frequently. All drinks in our tests had at least one sample containing one or more of the following contaminants: arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury. Those metals can have toxic effects on several organs in the body.