PATIENT GUIDE · SUPPLEMENTS

Creatine, explained. Simply.

Creatine is one of the most studied supplements in the world, and one of the most misunderstood. This guide covers what it is, who it may help, which form to choose, and how to fit it into your day.

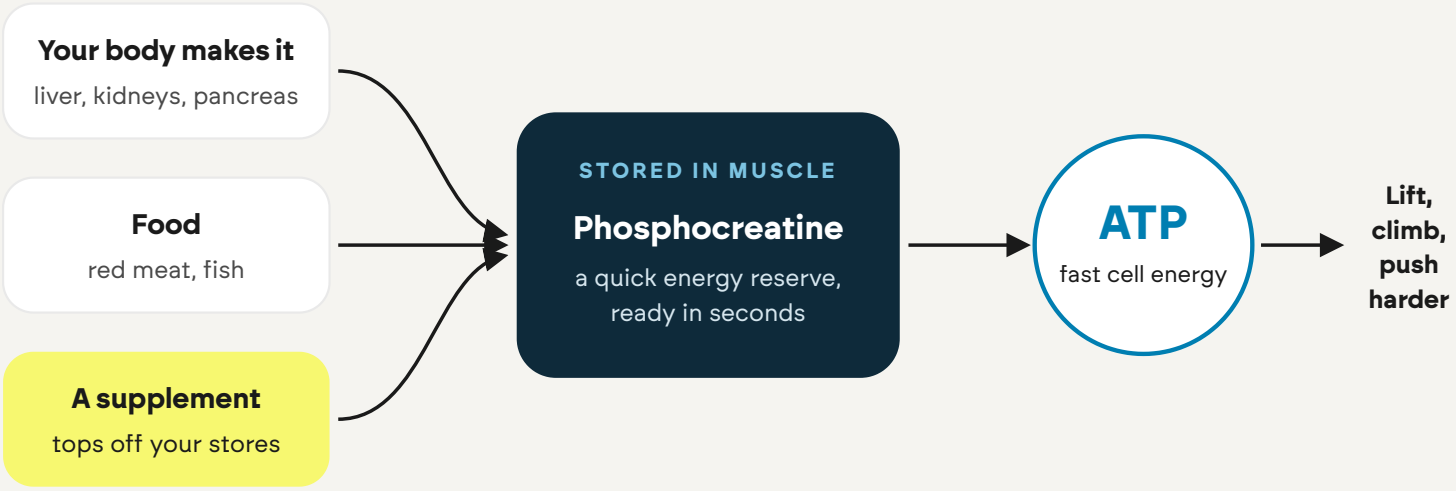
- **It is not a steroid or a hormone.** Your body makes creatine every day, and you get some from food.
- **It works best with strength training.** Creatine helps your muscles do a little more work, and the work is what builds strength.
- **Simple to take.** 5 grams a day, every day. No loading, no cycling, no special timing.



WHAT CREATINE IS

A fuel your muscles already use.

Creatine is a natural compound made from amino acids, the small building blocks of protein. Your liver, kidneys and pancreas make some every day. You also get a little from foods like red meat and fish. Almost all of it is stored in your muscles, with a small amount in your brain.



How it works, in plain words

Your cells run on a quick energy molecule called ATP. During a short, hard effort, like a heavy lift or climbing stairs, your muscles burn through ATP in seconds. Stored creatine (phosphocreatine) helps refill it fast, so you can do a few more reps or push a little harder.

Why a supplement can help

Your muscles can hold more creatine than diet and your body usually provide. Taking it every day slowly fills those stores. Over time, the extra work you can do in your training is what supports strength and muscle. Creatine helps the work. It does not replace it.

About 95%

of the creatine in your body is stored in your skeletal muscles, the muscles you move on purpose.

Decades

of research, with hundreds of studies. It is one of the most studied sports supplements there is.

WHO MAY BENEFIT

Not just for athletes. Made for real life.

Creatine is often linked with gyms and bodybuilders, but much of the newer research looks at everyday adults, women and people as they age. These are the groups who are most often studied.

People who strength train

The strongest research is here. Paired with lifting or bands, creatine supports gains in strength and lean muscle.

Anyone on a GLP-1 medicine

When you eat less and lose weight, some of that loss can be muscle. Strength training and enough protein come first. Creatine may help support them.

Women in perimenopause and menopause

Falling estrogen speeds up the loss of muscle and bone. Women also tend to have lower creatine stores, which makes this a busy area of study.

Adults over 50

Muscle naturally shrinks with age, a process called sarcopenia. Creatine plus strength training is studied as a way to slow that down.

Vegetarians and vegans

Creatine comes mostly from meat and fish, so plant-based eaters usually start with lower stores and may notice more of a change.

MYTHS VS. FACTS

What you have heard, and what is true.

MYTH

Creatine is a steroid.

FACT

It is not. Steroids are hormones. Creatine is made from amino acids, and your body makes it on its own every day.

MYTH

It will make me bulky.

FACT

Bulk takes years of heavy training and extra food. For most people, creatine supports firm, strong muscle, not size.

MYTH

The weight I gain is fat.

FACT

It is water inside your muscles. Creatine pulls a little water into muscle cells, so some people see a small bump on the scale in the first weeks. That is not fat.

MYTH

It hurts healthy kidneys.

FACT

Studies in healthy adults at normal amounts have not shown kidney harm. One tip: creatine can raise creatinine, a kidney number on blood tests, without any real problem. Tell your provider you take it before labs.

MYTH

Creatine causes hair loss.

FACT

This comes from one small 2009 study of young male rugby players that looked at a hormone, not at hair. It has not been repeated, and later studies have not found the same change.

MYTH

It is only for men and gym lovers.

FACT

Women and older adults are a major focus of current research. Women tend to have lower natural stores than men.

FORMS OF CREATINE

Lots of labels. One clear winner.

Store shelves are full of creatine types, each with its own claims. Almost all of the research uses one form: creatine monohydrate. Newer forms often cost more without proof that they work better.

FORM	WHAT IT IS	RESEARCH	BOTTOM LINE
Creatine monohydrate	Creatine joined to a water molecule. The classic form.	●●●●	**The gold standard.** Used in most studies. The form in HydroBelle + Creatine.
Micronized monohydrate	The same monohydrate, ground into finer powder.	●●●●	Same benefits. Mixes more smoothly in water.
Creatine HCl	Creatine joined to hydrochloride. Dissolves easily.	●○○○	Few studies. Not shown to work better than monohydrate.
Buffered creatine	Sold as Kre-Alkalyn. Claims less breakdown in the stomach.	●○○○	A head-to-head study found no advantage.
Creatine ethyl ester	Creatine changed to absorb "better."	●○○○	Studies found it raised muscle stores less than monohydrate.

Research dots show how much human research supports each form. Mixing powder into water and drinking it that day is fine.

How to shop for creatine

- ✓ **Monohydrate** on the label.
- ✓ **5 g per serving,** clearly listed.
- ✓ **No "proprietary blends"** that hide amounts.

A note on supplements

The FDA does not review supplements for safety or effectiveness before they are sold. A third-party testing seal (such as NSF or Informed Choice) means an outside lab checked what is in the product. Choose brands that are open about their ingredients and amounts.

THE RESEARCH

What we know, and what is next.

Some benefits of creatine are backed by decades of research. Others are newer and still being studied. Here is an honest look at where the science stands today.

Strong: many studies agree **Growing:** promising, some mixed results **Early:** small or first studies

WHAT WE KNOW

Strength and lean muscle, with training

Paired with resistance training, creatine supports greater gains in strength and lean muscle than training alone.

STRONG

Short, hard bursts of effort

Helps with repeated quick efforts like lifting, sprints and intervals.

STRONG

Safety in healthy adults

Studied at 3 to 5 g a day for up to several years, with no serious side effects found in healthy people.

STRONG

EMERGING RESEARCH

Aging muscle and bone

In older adults and women after menopause, creatine plus strength training is studied for muscle and bone. Muscle results look promising. Bone results are mixed.

GROWING

Brain, memory and focus

Your brain stores creatine too. Some studies show help with memory and mental tiredness, especially during poor sleep or stress, and in older adults.

GROWING

Mood

Small studies, mostly in women, have looked at creatine alongside standard depression treatment. Interesting, but far from proven.

HOW TO USE IT

Five grams a day. That is the plan.

The most important thing with creatine is not when you take it. It is taking it every day. Your muscle stores fill slowly and stay full with steady use.

1

Take 5 g daily

Every day, including rest days. Skipping days slowly lowers your stores.

2

Any time works

Morning, lunch or around a workout. Pick the time you will remember.

3

Drink your water

Mix it in water and keep sipping through the day.

4

Train for strength

Two or three strength sessions a week, with lifting, bands or body weight.

WHAT TO EXPECT

WEEK 1

Stores start to fill. You may not feel anything yet, and that is normal.

AROUND WEEK 4

Stores are usually full with steady daily use.

WEEKS 1 TO 4

A small scale bump is possible. That is water in muscle, not fat.

MONTH 2 AND ON

Strength and how your workouts feel are the best ways to track it.

Make it a habit

- **Stack it** with something you already do, like your morning water bottle.
- **Pair it with protein** at each meal. Muscle needs both the work and the building blocks.
- **One serving a day** is enough. More is not better.

Good to know

- **Stomach upset or bloating** can happen, mostly with large amounts at once. 5 g a day rarely causes it.
- **Getting blood work?** Tell your provider you take creatine, since it can raise creatinine.
- **Coffee is fine.** Most people can take creatine with their usual caffeine.





AVAILABLE FROM BELLE

Electrolytes and creatine. One stick.

HydroBelle + Creatine is our zero-sugar electrolyte drink mix with a full 5 g of creatine monohydrate in every stick. When you eat less, you also take in less of the salt and water food usually brings. This puts both back in your glass, with your daily creatine riding along.