



Weight Gainers Good or Bad?

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I recently received this question from a website member: My question is in relation to weight gain supplements. Two of my son's friends are taking weight gain powder drinks to add weight. I have looked at growth charts and my son is in the average range for height but he is below average category for weight. Do these weight gain products work and are they safe?

Let me start by explaining a very simple equation: If calories consumed is greater than calories burned you will gain weight. If calories consumed is less than calories burned you will lose weight.

Seems very simple and in actuality it is very simple. So often I have athletes that come into my office and SWEAR that they cannot gain weight or that they cannot lose weight. This equation that I revealed above is more than an equation it is a law and will ALWAYS be accurate.

I like to start by actually seeing what the athlete eats on a daily basis. This includes quantity and times of day these foods are eaten. It will also include any beverages that are consumed. I will then need to understand how active this athlete is on a daily basis so I ask for a list of activities this person participates on a daily basis. I will then take these lists and determine what foods need to be added or taken out and activities that need to be added or taken out.

It is absolutely important that every athlete eats at least every three hours. It does not matter if this athlete wants to lose weight or gain weight, the athlete needs to eat every three hours. Contents of each meal will change with each athlete depending on the individual goal. For example each meal should consist of a portion of protein and a portion of carbohydrates. If the athlete is trying to gain weight then the athlete will want to include a portion of starches in their meals and may even want to increase to two portions of protein and two portions of carbohydrates.

I always start my athletes on this program for the first couple of weeks. Then we will weigh in and take body fat % to determine progress if any. If no progress is seen then modifications will be made.

If after two weeks of eating properly and lifting properly and no change is made then we attempt to change the diet one more time. If after the next two weeks we still see no changes then we will begin to use supplements and weight gainers.

In the above scenario I do not have a problem with an athlete using a weight gain product. Often times these products are loaded with "tons" of calories and include a good portion of protein and carbs that often an athlete may not be able to consume in a meal. The other advantage to these weight gain products is often convenience. In today's world it is often not possible to prepare and consume all the meals you should be consuming. These products may allow you to eat or drink on the run with little prep time and little consumption time. Not ideal but if you need to gain weight then you need to gain weight.

In regards to the safety of these products. For the most part, weight gain products are very safe. As safe as eating a regular meal. You will find some weight gainer products that will contain various supplements such as creatine contained in them as well as others. Please note that this discussion is for another article but it is my opinion that weight gain products for the most part are very safe and in most cases very effective.

Dr. Steele specializes in training hockey players off ice and in the weight room. His programs have helped hockey players from all over the world from peewees through the pros improve their game and reach their ultimate potential. In addition he is founder and president of Better Hockey Inc., which runs betterhockey.com, and TOPDOG Off-ice strength training and conditioning programs for players in person or over the internet/phone. Dr. Steele can be reached at info@betterhockey.com.

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