

Best BCAA Supplement Buyers Guide with 2019's Top 10

written by Mike Roberto | January 27, 2019

So many BCAA supplements... only so many you can try! PricePLOW's got you covered in this guide. However...

You might not want to be here... (are you looking for a full EAA?!))

This list is for *BCAA* supplements. As time has gone on, we've seen that full-spectrum EAA supplements work better than just the BCAAs. So chances are, you *really* want to look at our **Best Amino Acid Supplement** list, which will have far more than just the BCAAs.

But in case you're here looking for the best BCAAs *without* those extra EAAs (due to taste or budget perhaps), we have you covered.

Our Top 5 BCAA Supplements (BCAA only, no added EAA)

5. MAN Sports ISO-Amino

The original one to keep it simple, inexpensive, but *delicious* by revolutionizing the industry with real candy flavors!

Amino Acid Ingredient Information

Aside from taste and mixability, the biggest difference between all of these products are the *extra ingredients* that the manufacturers add to the three branched-chain amino acids. We call them "add-ons".

If you want to read about the good, the bad, and the overrated, then [click here](#) to quickly skip down to the bottom.

ISO-Amino – Deals and Price Drop Alerts

Get Price Alerts

Get ISO-Amino Price Alerts Get MAN Sports alerts Get BCAA Powder price drops

Also get hot deal alerts

No spam, no scams.

Disclosure: PricePLOW relies on pricing from stores with which we have a business relationship. We work hard to keep pricing current, but you may find a better offer.

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4. NutraBio BCAA 5000

Trusted and third-party lab tested! Also available in natural form with NutraBio BCAA Natural 5000.

NutraBio BCAA 5000 – Deals and Price Drop Alerts

Get Price Alerts

Get BCAA 5000 Price Alerts Get NutraBio alerts Get BCAA Powder price drops

Also get hot deal alerts

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3. Ghost BCAA

Two words: **Swedish Fish**. This is easily the craziest tasting BCAA on the market. Ghost *nailed* it with this one!!

Ghost BCAA – Deals and Price Drop Alerts

Get Price Alerts

Get BCAA Price Alerts Get GHOST alerts Get BCAA Powder price drops

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2. InnovaPharm Novamino

Added Betaine for the gains!

InnovaPharm Novamino – Deals and Price Drop Alerts

Get Price Alerts

Get Novamino Price Alerts Get InnovaPharm alerts Get BCAA Powder price drops

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1. Xtend Elite

A phenomenal blend if you're looking for *endurance* – BCAAs, Peak02, beta alanine, and more!

Xtend Elite – Deals and Price Drop Alerts

Get Price Alerts

Get Elite Price Alerts Get Xtend alerts Get BCAA Powder price drops

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Thank you for reading our guide. If you would like to go back to the “choose your own adventure” guide section of this document, [click here](#).

You may also enjoy our other guides:

- **Best Protein Powder**
- **Best Fat Burner**

- **Best Pre Workout Supplement**

References

Add-on Amino Acids We Look For

Branched chain amino acid supplements all used to be the same, but not anymore. Now, each one often has its own plethora of bonus ingredients.

Given the vast amount of BCAA products and formulas on the market, there's bound to be some standout ingredients, overrated ingredients, and under the radar picks that you may not even be aware of. Rest assured though, we've got you covered here as well.

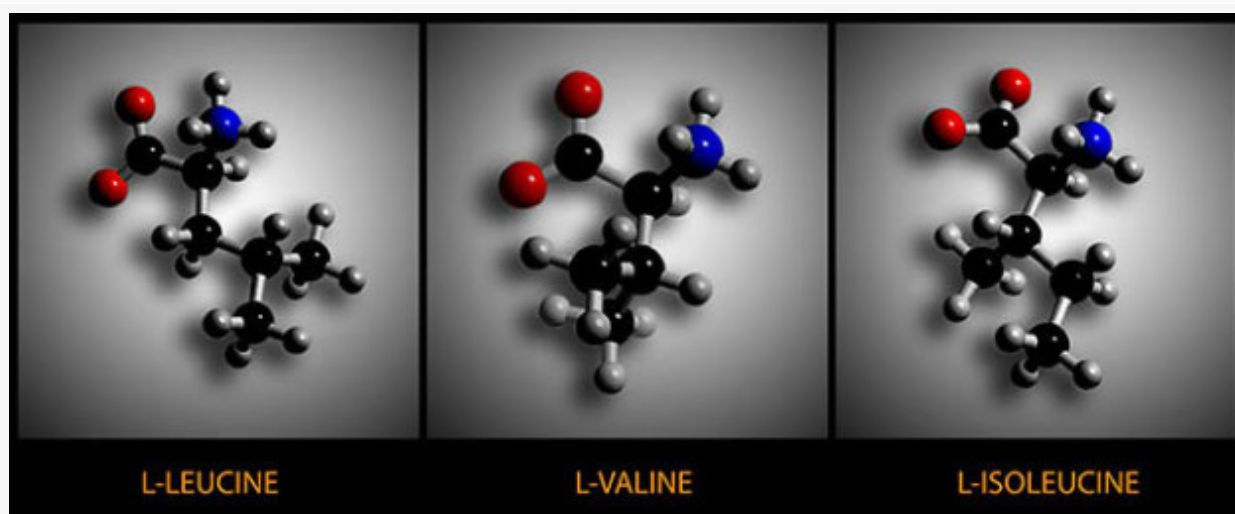
- **The "Goods"**

- **All 9 EAAs**

Even though this is a BCAA guide, we still do recommend reading the latest research on our BCAA vs EAA guide. Full spectrum EAAs may not taste as good as the best BCAAs, but they're good enough that they're worth using instead now.

- **The BCAAs**

This should be obvious, but you want a solid 5g dose, at minimum, in each serving of a BCAA product, preferably with 2.5-3g of Leucine. This amount of leucine has been shown to stimulate muscle protein synthesis, leading to greater muscle gains.[1,2] They also increase exercise output[11] and reduce soreness.[6,17]



Leucine, Valine, and Isoleucine are the three BCAAs, and they're an extremely important part of your diet

HICA

HICA (*alpha-hydroxy-isocaproic acid*) is a metabolite of leucine that has been shown to increase lean muscle mass, reduce soreness, and decrease fat mass.[3] As we all know, Leucine is the catalyst for igniting the mTOR pathway in the body, so no leucine, no muscle building.

We're huge fans of this ingredient – especially for dieters trying to keep their muscle tissue – but not many formulas have it. Of those that do, as we write this, only *one* of them actually states how much is on the label!

- **Betaine**

Betaine (a.k.a. *trimethylglycine* or *TMG*) is an amino acid that is a great addition to any pre or intra workout product. It boosts power output, reduces cortisol levels, and improves cellular hydration.[12,13,14] The clinical dose used in the best studies is 2.5g per day, each and every day.

The real question we have lately is not whether it works – it's whether it works *in addition to creatine*. They both work similarly, so do you really need 3-5g per day of creatine *and* 2.5g per day of betaine?

We're not sure yet, but if you're a daily creatine user, you might not need a *ton* of this. From the data we've seen, it certainly can't hurt, though.



Egregiously Stolen from Athletix

- **Citrulline Malate**

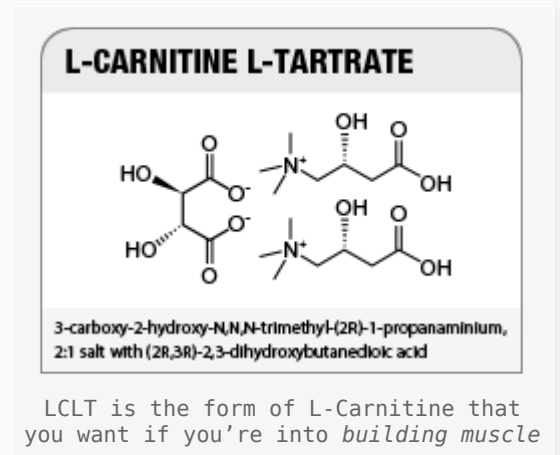
Citrulline Malate reduces fatigue and soreness and fatigue while enhancing your training threshold.[15,16] This will help to increase your intensity during training and allow you to exercise for longer bouts of time before succumbing to fatigue.

Note that when we want *pumps* we go for sheer l-citrulline (such as with Muscle Elements AmiNO Flow, our favorite weightlifting amino acid supplement).

But when we want *endurance*, we're going to look more towards citrulline *malate* to get some of that fatigue-fighting malic acid in there. The ever popular Scivation Xtend has the malate form, for instance.

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- **L-Carnitine L-Tartrate**



Abbreviated as *LCLT*, L-Carnitine L-Tartrate is involved in energy production in the body and also cellular metabolism.[7] Aside from these benefits though, LCLT can help offset any post exercise soreness that may result from intense training sessions, which is why many users take BCAAs in the first place. This is due to its ability to increase certain growth factors in the body (IGF Binding Protein 3, particularly).[45]

So if you're really trying to get rid of soreness, LCLT should be a featured product.

Note that not all L-Carnitine products are the same! Our two favorite "versions" of L-Carnitine are LCLT (for recovery) and ALCAR (Acetyl L-Carnitine) for focus. Straight L-Carnitine is a waste for most people though, unless you're carnitine deficient (vegetarians and elderly, usually).

- **Taurine**

Taurine is one of the most abundant amino acids in the body, so it may be easy to write this off as one of the "overrated" aminos, but that would be hasty on your part. While it is "conditionally essential" and quite plentiful during normal times, during intense exercise or periods of extreme duress, your body goes through its stores of Taurine rather quickly and it can't make enough to keep up with demand.

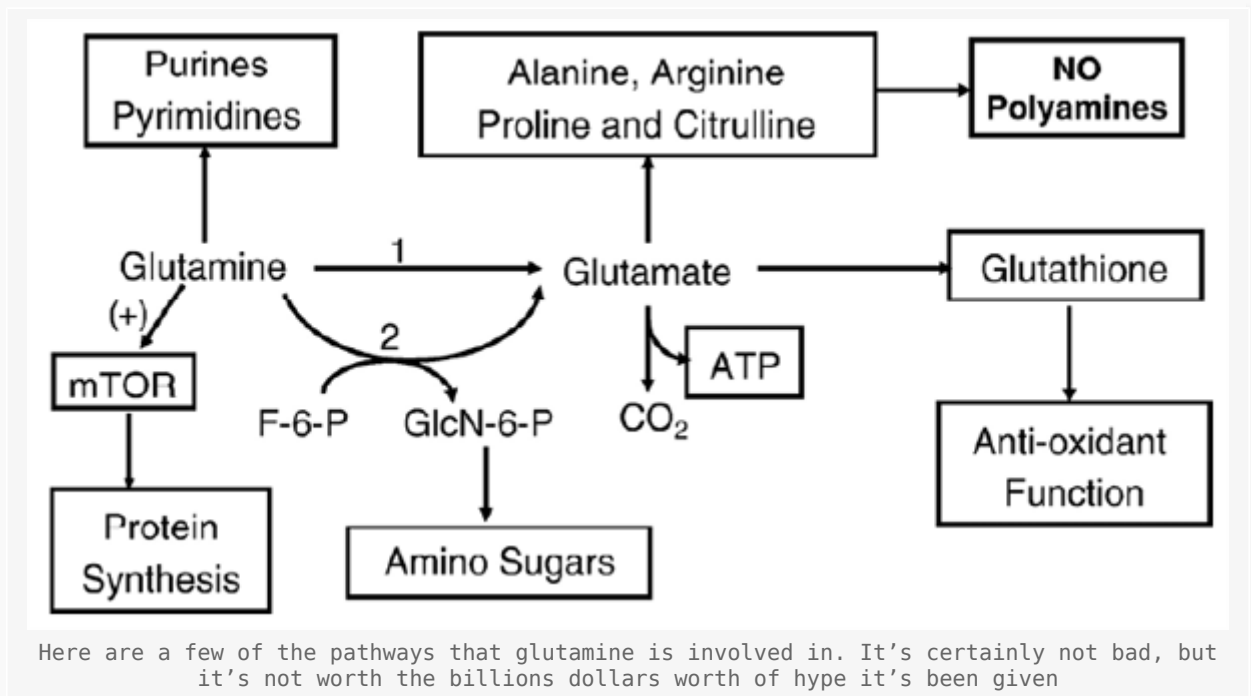
Taurine will help keep you hydrated by pulling valuable nutrients and water into your muscles,[41] thus allowing you to continue to exercise for longer bouts without succumbing to fatigue.

- **The "Overrated"**

- **Glutamine**

Glutamine has gotten tons of hype over the years from the bro-science as a

staple ingredient to help speed recovery.[5] The fact of the matter is that research is conflicting at best[4] and worst still is that unless it's taken in tandem with L-Alanine, glutamine is broken down in your stomach before it's absorbed by the intestines.[8,9]



• Electrolytes (Depending on Diet)

It's important to get several electrolytes in – especially potassium, magnesium, and sodium – but it *really* depends on what you need in your diet.

However, being honest, there are two issues we have with all the raving that sports drink manufacturers love to throw in our faces:

1. There is no research suggesting a **PERFORMANCE** boost from taking electrolytes!

By Gatorade's own admission (they link to this from their own site[64]), **the sodium-based beverage did not affect performance!**

Instead, the Penn State-based researchers attempt to confuse the issue in their abstract with this ludicrous sentence:

Beverage [Na(+)] did not affect performance; however, time to exhaustion was significantly shorter during the -4% (8 +/- 3 min) and -2% (14 +/- 3 min) vs. 0% (22 +/- 5 min) and +2% (26 +/- 6 min)

So the sodium-based beverage didn't affect performance, *but* the subjects didn't get as tired when they were hydrated vs. when they were dehydrated to 4% or 2% body weight loss.

But we already *know* that your performance is going to degrade when you're dehydrated.

These authors of that study are mashing two completely unrelated sentences together, likely in an attempt to confound the issue and cover up the failure in performance enhancement (at least by sodium)! Weak. Bad logic, bad science, bad writing... and they know it.

Also, let's not forget that Penn State is a disgraced school with a horrific history of unspeakable things having happened – likely with full knowledge from higher-ups – in their football program. To put it lightly, absolutely nothing can be trusted from this scum of a university, including this purposefully-confounded study.

2. **Most Americans already get plenty of Sodium, the center focus of most electrolyte drinks.**

Now, if you want to discuss potassium and magnesium, then there are great benefits there. Bring on the potassium! But the whole "replacing lost salt" situation is a bit ridiculous given the Western diet, and still, there's no link to actual performance boost.

Things of course begin to change when you have low-carb dieters or a keto diet, where these electrolytes are *critically* important to supplement.

In short, we're *mostly* interested in getting a performance boost, and really don't see it from the electrolytes in any sports drink. It's really from the water and carbs, which you can get nearly anywhere.

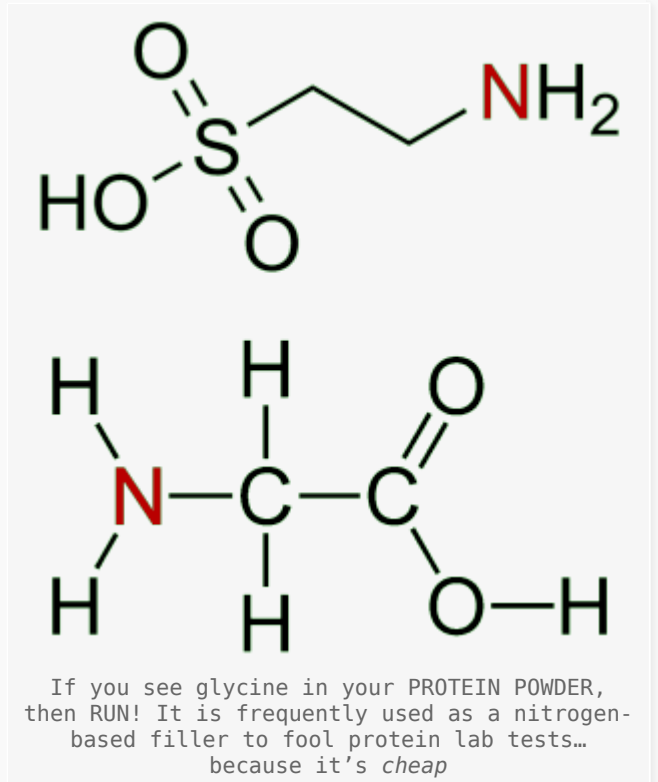
Are we happy to get electrolytes in our BCAA supplements? Sure. But are they *overrated* for most of our readers? Almost definitely.

• **Arginine**

Arginine, much like glutamine, was an old "staple" in bodybuilding circles. It was traditionally used as a nitric oxide (NO) booster. The should have led to increased blood flow, nutrient transport, and pumps. Sadly, arginine is not nearly as effective as once touted and has been surpassed by more effective NO boosters like Citrulline and Agmatine.[10]

The good news is that we really don't see this one in many (if any) BCAA supplements.

- **Glycine**



Glycine also acts as a neurotransmitter in the body. It typically influences the GABAergic and Glutaminergic systems, but in terms of exercise performance this doesn't really do much for us. There are no relevant studies demonstrating Glycine's effectiveness in increasing performance or aiding recovery.

It may help you get to sleep quicker,[46,47] but we're interested in performance here, so this filler amino acid gets relegated to the "overrated" category.

The worst part is that this is a *highly glucogenic* amino acid, which will spike your blood sugar a bit. This is not what dieters want – especially low-carb dieters!

- **Silk Amino Acids**

Silk Amino Acids (SAAs) are a unique category of amino acids obtained from the Silkworm cocoon, of all places. They need to be hydrolyzed in order to be digested (an additional processing step which would further increase the price of a supplement).

Aside from this, any studies showing their usefulness in increasing performance have only been done on animals (rats).[48] So, they *might* pose some benefit, but we're not really willing to pay for them to be included in a BCAA supplement.

Proprietary blend or Non-Prop

Typically, we aren't huge fans of proprietary blends here on PricePLOW. We always prefer to know what exactly we're putting in our body and how much of each ingredient we're consuming. That being said, we're "OK" with prop blends when we know that we're getting at least 5g of BCAA.

However, if we start to see aminos like glycine, glutamine, and taurine near the top of the blend, we're not so enthusiastic. While nice to have extra aminos, these aren't the "best or brightest" free form amino acids to have in abundance as the research on these is mixed.

In our opinion, none of these supplements are so "magical" that they should be masked with a prop blend of any kind. There's not that many secrets to it (besides the flavoring systems). Pick ingredients with certain benefits and be on your way!

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