

## Ask Stew: Navigating Performance Nutrition / Supplements – yes or no?



27th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron Airmen attempt to recover after a grueling physical, mental and emotional assessment part of pre-qualification for Deployed Aircraft Ground Response Element selection (U.S. Air Force photo/Chip Slack)

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By Stew Smith

The question of the week has to do with getting overwhelmed with not just eating healthy foods, but finding healthy foods that also help you with athletic performance. Here is an email from a future special ops soldier worried about failing due to nutritional needs especially dehydration. One of the biggest issues with every basic training or special ops selection program during hot and humid summers or dry and arid environments is heat exhaustion due to dehydration as well as a mission ending ailment known as rhabdomyolysis that is linked to dehydration.

*Stew, I am in the Army now and have seen the good and bad of training. Some great training along the pipeline, but after a hot and humid summer in Fort Benning Georgia and Fort Bragg North Carolina, some great people were severely injured as heat casualties and some even got Rhabdo. Both of these ended many good soldier's special ops goals. Do you have any recommendations? **Is there anything legal that I can add to my food to avoid dehydration or worse?***

This is such a great question as not only are there these training ending injuries, but some even die in training due to these severely serious ailments. There are hydration and some rhabdomyolysis problems many experience. The good news is that the military is researching many products to help alleviate such issues as these issues contribute to the high failure rates of many military training programs. The quick answer is to add more salt to your food when you are sweating profusely and if possible try some of the following brands of trusted nutrition and supplements that can help prevent these serious issues. Also, higher muscle mass individuals are more susceptible to rhabdomyolysis compared to a more leaner athlete. Being better prepared for the higher endurance, load bearing, and other movements is critical as it tends to be bigger mass, de-conditioned, and dehydrated athletes that fall prey to Rhabdo.

Obviously during training programs, you will have to use and should only access approved nutrition and supplemental products. Some that I know the military have tested and are in the process of testing listed below. In fact, these are also approved by United States Olympic Teams and are cleared by a third party safety organization called [NSF International](#) so they are clean from any contaminants that may affect drug tests or more importantly your health.

### Hydration Drinks and Powders Recommended

**Drip Drop Hydration** - One product that can be found in grocery stores and Walgreens is a product '[Drip Drop](#), which we featured on Military.com a few years ago on a similar hydration post.

**[Shaklee Products](#)** - There is another product that has its roots in NASA space program. Shaklee and NASA have been working together for more than two decades. Most recently, both Capt.'s Marc and Scott Kelly have taken Shaklee nutritional products into space. Originally, NASA tapped Shaklee as a partner to help our astronauts return to earth safely by providing a solution to address General Re-entry Syndrome. Together their research led combined scientific teams to create AstroAde, a special rehydration product that is still used today on every flight

into space. ([Verification links / Scientific studies.](#)) Shaklee has since remodeled AstroAde into a variety of Hydration drinks that are used by many Olympians as they exceed standards for the IOC-established drug testing regimen.

Shaklee's hydration product HYDRATE plus their nutritional Performance Physique + Bio-Build Recovery Protein Supplement which are designed for rapid muscle recovery have already been approved by the Head Nutritionist at the Air Force Combat Control Schoolhouse and is heading up the Chain of Command for approval to be tested by the trainees in hopes of reducing Rhabdomyolysis as well as preventing hydration / heat casualty issues.

Shaklee, the company, now over 60 years old, designed testing procedures that far exceed the NSF and USP seal of certification. Shaklee participated on the board that developed dissolution and disintegration standards adopted by the U.S. Pharmacopoeia (USP) to provide standards for the NSF and USP for certifying supplements.

Thorne Research – Catalyte is a quick and easy powder to add to your water that is also loaded with electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, magnesium, as well as vitamin B, C and other nutrients to not only help you become hydrated quicker than water alone, but start to help with recovery. Thorne has an entire line of supplements approved by over 10 Olympic Teams as their exclusive nutrition supplement partner. NSF Approved.

Ascent Protein – For pure recovery, the Ascent whey protein blend contains Native Whey, and the Native Whey is the specific protein that has 17 percent higher levels of Leucine. (See why leucine is important). Native Whey is the least processed dairy protein available today. It is a very fine powder and does not clump when shaken. This same protein powder is used in baby formula, so it is so pure it is actually considered a food -- not a supplement. This requires greater scrutiny and regulation by the Food and Drug Administration.

Both Thorne and Shaklee offer full list of products to choose from. Finding a company that meets these high standards for product is critical no matter what your health, fitness, and performance goals are. My recommendation is find what works for you that is allowed in your military unit and test it. Typically, once through the selection process of training, these products are more generally accepted and used among military members.