

Creatine Loading & Timing Guide

Creatine monohydrate is one of the most researched supplements in sports science. This guide covers the two evidence-backed protocols for reaching saturation, when to take it for best results, and the mistakes that quietly waste most people's money.

Two Ways to Saturate Your Muscles

Loading protocol: 20g per day, split into 4 doses of 5g, for 5-7 days. Saturates muscle creatine stores fast — within about a week.

Maintenance-only protocol: skip loading and take 3-5g per day from day one. Reaches the same saturation point as loading, just slower — around 28 days, per Hultman et al. (1996), Journal of Applied Physiology.

Daily Checklist

- ☐ Loading phase (optional): 5g, 4x per day, with meals — days 1-7
- ☐ Maintenance dose: 3-5g per day, every day, including rest days
- ☐ Mix with a carbohydrate or protein source to aid uptake
- ☐ Take at a consistent time — saturation matters more than timing precision
- ☐ Drink an extra 500ml of water per day while supplementing

What the Research Says About Timing

Antonio & Ciccone (2013), Journal of the International Society of Sports Nutrition: resistance-trained men who took creatine immediately post-workout gained more strength and lean mass over 4 weeks than those who took it pre-workout, though the difference was modest.

Kreider et al. (2017) ISSN Position Stand: creatine monohydrate is safe and effective for both men and women across the lifespan, and does not require cycling on and off — continuous daily use is fine.

Timing Checklist

- ☐ Prefer post-workout dosing on training days, per current evidence
- ☐ On rest days, take with any meal — timing matters less than consistency
- ☐ Do not cycle off — daily use maintains saturation; stopping reverses it
- ☐ Re-saturation after stopping takes roughly the same time as initial loading

Common Mistakes

- ☐ Buying flavored blends with proprietary doses under 3g of actual creatine
- ☐ Expecting visible results in under a week without a loading phase
- ☐ Stopping supplementation right before a competition or key event
- ☐ Skipping water intake increases and blaming creatine for bloating

This guide is educational and not a substitute for individualized medical or athletic advice. Consult a physician before starting any new supplement, particularly if you have kidney conditions.