What you consume in the 30-60 minutes before you train can make or break your workout, not to mention the results you see. These four nutrients are non-negotiable staples of a real pre-workout stack.

Whey protein should be first on your must have list. Protein is the wonder nutrient for active muscles, doing everything from stopping muscle breakdown to activating muscle growth. Chicken breasts, fish, eggs, and other whole food protein sources don't compare. They all take far too long to digest to offer any benefit during your workout.

While the branched chain amino acids (BCAA's) leucine, isoleucine, and valine are found in whey, they're such an important energy source for working muscles and so critical for muscle growth that you need to add an extra dose of them to your pre-workout stack.

By now, I don't have to convince you of the importance of creatine for muscle growth and strength. Hundreds of studies confirm its efficacy. Did you know, however, that one of the best times to take creatine is immediately before workouts. This is because creatine supplies muscles with quick energy to help you pump out extra reps, so be sure you give them a dose when you need it most.

Research shows that when athletes take beta-alanine before workouts, they're stronger and gain more muscle. This amino acid has been shown to push creatine's proven benefits to an even higher level. Athlete's who stack creatine and beta-alanine gain more strength and mass than counterparts who take creatine alone.