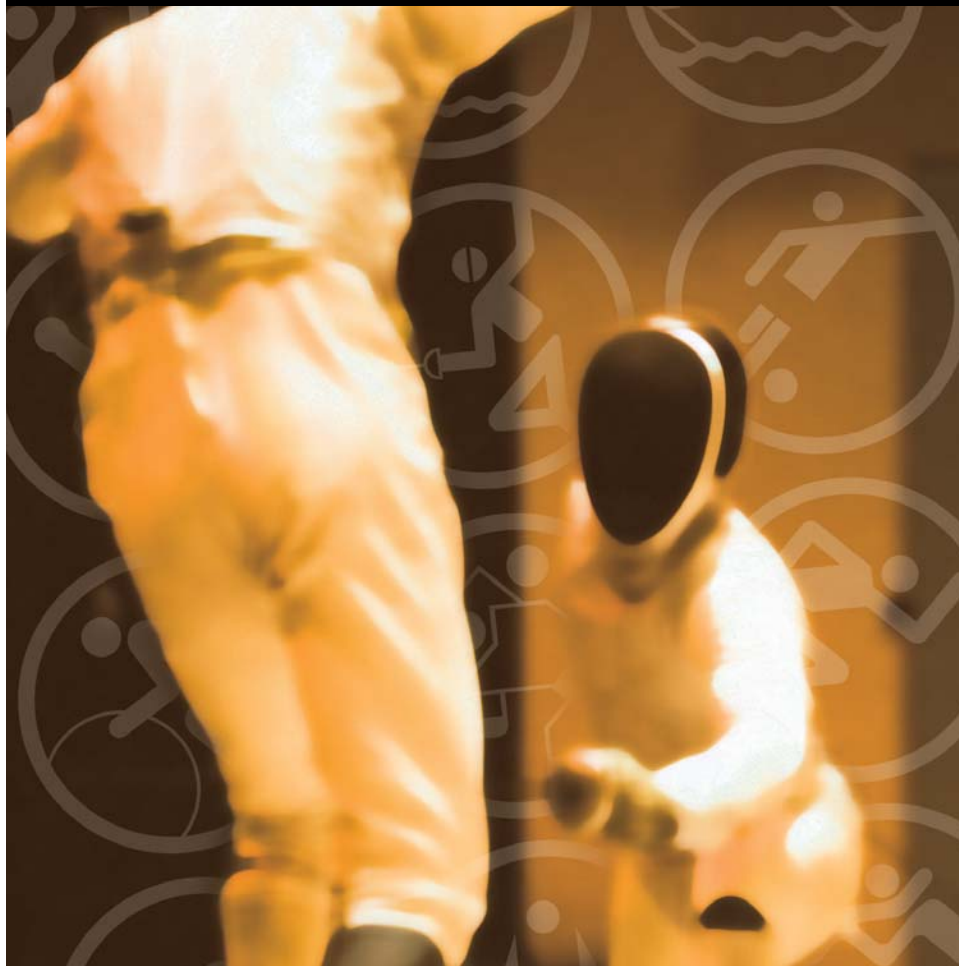


Dietary Supplements

Q&As





Why is the use of supplements by athletes such a concern?

In many countries, the manufacturing of dietary supplements is not appropriately regulated by the government. This means that the ingredients on the inside may not match those listed on the outside of the box or package. In some cases, the undeclared substances found in the supplement can include one that is prohibited under anti-doping regulations. Studies have shown that as many as 20 percent of supplements on sale to athletes can contain products that are not declared on the label but that could lead to a positive doping result. A large number of positive tests have been attributed to the misuse of supplements.

What if the government legislation is strict and enforced?

Even where the supplement industry is properly regulated and rules are enforced, contamination - whether accidental or deliberate - may still occur. There will never be 100 percent assurance for athletes that a supplement does not contain a prohibited substance.

What is WADA's position on supplements use?

It is WADA's position that a good diet is of utmost importance to athletes competing on the international stage. WADA is also very concerned about the number of athletes who are prepared to take supplements with little knowledge of what real benefits they provide and whether or not they contain prohibited substances. In the end, taking a poorly labeled dietary supplement is not an adequate defense in a doping hearing. Athletes should be aware of the dangers of potential contamination of supplements and of the significant effect of the principle of strict liability.

In 2000, the Athletes' Commission of the International Olympic Committee issued a similar statement saying: *"We would like to caution the athletes of the world that recent findings show that supplements may contain drugs that will cause the athletes to test positive for substances that are currently on the banned list. Moreover, we as a commission fully endorse that athletes must take complete responsibility for all drugs that are found in their bodies due to the use of nutritional supplements".*



What happens if an athlete tests positive from taking a supplement?

Under the strict liability rule, athletes are responsible for any substance that may be found in their bodies. It does not matter how the substance got there. If an athlete tests positive, the result is a disqualification, and possible sanction or suspension. Ultimately, athletes are responsible for what they ingest.

What if an athlete really needs to use a supplement?

Athletes who believe that they need supplements should first consult a competent sport science professional such as a sport nutritionist or a sports physician to ensure they are professionally advised as to whether their needs can be met from normal foods. If the professionals advise the taking of supplements, they should be suitable for the athlete's nutrient needs and safe for their health, and athletes should take them with full knowledge and acceptance of the strict liability rule.

In 2003, the IOC Nutrition Working Group stated its position on supplement use by athletes: *"Athletes are cautioned against the indiscriminate use of dietary supplements. Supplements that provide essential nutrients may be of help where food intake or food choices are restricted, but this approach to achieving adequate nutrient intake is normally only a short term option. The use of supplements does not compensate for poor food choices and an inadequate diet. Athletes contemplating the use of supplements and sports foods should consider their efficacy, their cost, the risk to health and performance, and the potential for a positive doping test."*



What else should athletes know about supplements?

Most supplement manufacturers make claims about their products that are not backed by valid scientific research and they rarely advise the consumer about potential adverse effects. The supplement industry is a money-making venture and athletes should get proper help to distinguish marketing strategies from reality. If athletes make the decision to use a supplement they are advised to use products from companies which have developed a good reputation and use good manufacturing practices, such as major multinational pharmaceutical companies. Athletes can contact the manufacturers for more information or preferably should ask their physician to do this on their behalf. As general warnings:

- Supplements which advertise "muscle building" or "fat burning" capabilities are the most likely to contain a prohibited substances, either an anabolic agent or a stimulant.
- The terms "herbal" and "natural" do not necessarily mean that the product is "safe".
- Examples of prohibited substances that may be in dietary supplements are:
 - Dehydroepiandrosterone ("DHEA")
 - Androstenedione/diol (and variations including "19" and "nor")
 - Ma huang
 - Ephedrine
 - Amphetamine(s) (also contained in "street drugs" such as ecstasy)
- Pure vitamins and minerals are not prohibited on their own but athletes are advised to use reputable brands and avoid those combined with other substances.
- Black market or unlabelled products are a particular concern; athletes should not use anything which has an unknown source even if it comes from a coach or fellow athlete.
- While purchasing supplements through the Internet, athletes should avoid companies which do not indicate business locations other than post office boxes or only indicate contact information which would prevent someone from locating them, such as an email address.

Note: Even if an athlete adheres to all these warnings, there is no guarantee that taking a supplement will not result in a positive doping test.



What is being done to minimize the problems caused by the use of supplements?

WADA, in cooperation with the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, the Canadian Olympic Committee and Sport Canada, organized recently in Montreal a symposium to deal with the consequences of the use and misuse of dietary supplements by athletes. Participants from within sport, anti-doping organizations, medical and scientific fields, industry and governments, together with elite athletes and coaches discussed and made specific recommendations for action in the short, medium, and longer term. Those recommendations include:

- agreement on a common definition of "dietary supplements";
- implementation of a coordinated research program to identify what supplements are being used and misused by athletes and why;
- establishment of a global database on supplements to ensure that access to all current and reliable information on supplements is made available;
- consideration of a product testing and certification program of supplements which could be supported by the industry;
- agreement by industry to implement self-regulation programs to improve quality, minimize contamination and provide accurate labeling. Stringent standards and third party, independent auditing and monitoring would be important aspects of such a program;
- enactment by governments of appropriate regulations on the industry because of their responsibilities for public health, for consumer protection, and for education;
- organisation of a follow-up symposium to occur later in 2004 to ensure that recommendations turn into concrete and coordinated actions.

Information on the symposium and recommendations for action can be found on WADA's website at www.wada-ama.org.



Where can athletes get more information on supplements?

The best place to go for information is the athlete's national anti-doping agency. Many already have information on their websites about supplements. Some examples are:

Anti-Doping Norway www.antidoping.no

Australian Institute of Sport www.ais.org.au/nutrition/supp.htm

Australian Sports Drug Agency www.asda.org.au

Bundesamt für Sport und Fachkommission für Dopingbekämpfung (Swiss)
www.dopinginfo.ch

Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport www.cces.ca

Japan Anti-Doping Agency www.anti-doping.or.jp

Netherlands Centre for Doping Affairs www.necedo.nl

New Zealand Sports Drug Agency www.nzsda.co.nz

South African Institute for Drug Free Sport www.drugfreesport.org.za

UK Sport www.uksport.gov.uk

United States Anti-Doping Agency www.usantidoping.org