

Fisher-Titus Medical Center

SPORTS INJURY GUIDELINES

“The Winning Team for Your Athletic Health Care Needs”

Nutritional Supplements

Introduction

Many dietary supplements, including vitamins, minerals, amino acids, are claimed to aid health and improve the performance of athletes. While some dietary supplements may be safe and provide the benefits claimed, others may be ineffective, dangerous, or contain ingredients banned by athletic organizations. Athletes need to be educated on how to evaluate dietary supplements and how to make knowledgeable decisions when choosing supplements.



Risks

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not review dietary supplements for safety, effectiveness, purity, or potency before supplements are marketed. As a result, athletes can never be absolutely sure of the purity or contents of the supplements. In addition, the wordings on some supplements labels are often impressive to athletes seeking a performance advantage. Some products tout “natural” ingredients, but may athletes fail to realize that “natural” does not necessarily mean “safe”.

Finally, some supplements may contain ingredients not declared on the label that could cause unsuspecting athletes to test positive for banned substances.

Standards for Testing

Generally, products are tested against four standards:

- Identity – to ensure the supplement meets recognized standards of quality
- Strength – to confirm that the supplement contains the amount of ingredient claimed on the label
- Purity – to verify that the supplement is free of contaminants
- Availability – to make sure that the supplement breaks apart properly so that it may be used by the body.

Reference: Gatorade Sports Science Institute

Tips for Choosing a Supplement

Do Research.

Some independent labs provide test results and information to help athletes evaluate and select supplements. Sources such as www.consumerlab.com, www.cfsan.fda.gov can guide athletes to obtain information about supplements.

Look for well-known and trusted brands.

Nationally known food and drug manufacturers who also market supplements generally produce supplements under strict quality control procedures they already have in place. Such manufacturers can be contacted and able to demonstrate that the product passes tests for the four standards. If the company does not answer questions or addresses issues related to the product, athletes should not use the product.

Disregard supplements with unclear or confusing product claims. Athletes should be wary if the claims for the product sound too good to be true.

Coaches/Parents. Teach athletes to consider the total diet first. Also, recommend that athletes check with a doctor, registered dietitian before using a supplement and encourage athletes to read the label, follow all directions, and heed any warnings.