



## Dietary & Nutritional Supplements for Sports People

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Many athletes believe they need to take nutritional supplements to help with their training, to reduce illness and injury, and to help them perform better. Surveys among the sporting population indicate widespread usage of supplements even though there is little scientific evidence to support their use.

There is a large variety of food & nutritional supplements available in pharmacies, supermarkets, sport shops, health shops and over the internet. The nutritional supplement industry is an unregulated industry. This means the legislation governing food supplements is more lax than for pharmaceutical products. Manufactures of food supplements are not obliged by law to declare all the ingredients of a product on the label. This means that even if you study the label of a food product you can never be 100% certain that it is free of all banned substances. Also in an unregulated industry quality control would not be a priority and thus contamination of products occurs frequently. Remember in this industry **there is no requirement by law to list on the label all the ingredients in the product.**

A survey commissioned by the International Olympic Council and published in April 2002 studied 634 supplements purchased in 13 different countries. Of the 634 products tested, 94 of these contained prohibited substances, which could have led to a positive doping offence. Another 66 products were questionable. In total this amounted to 20% of the products tested.

These products are all available in stores or on the Internet. Herbal teas, vitamin & minerals supplements, mixed creatine products, weight reducing remedies, protein products, weight gain products etc can all fall into the above category. There are creatine products produced throughout the world which when tested have also been found to contain the stimulant ephedrine.

Talent is the most important attribute a sports person can have. This along with good training practices, psychological support and effective nutrition support are essential to be a top athlete. All the supplements in the world will not make you a champion if you don't already have talent and the other essential ingredients.



Common reasons cited by athletes for using supplements are:

- To compensate for an inadequate diet
- To meet abnormal demands of hard training
- To benefit performance
- To keep up with team mates or opponents
- Recommended by a coach, parent or other influential individual

Good sports dietetic advice indicates that you should only take additional dietary / nutritional supplements if advised to do so by your sports dietitian, doctor or qualified pharmacist. If you stick to this rule you will not run the risk of a positive dope test in sport.

There are a number of brands of vitamin/mineral supplements, which are safe to take. These are listed on web site [www.eirpharm.ie](http://www.eirpharm.ie)

If you are taking any food or nutrition supplement without checking with your medical team you must be prepared to suffer the consequences. **The IOC expects the athlete to be responsible for everything, which goes into his or her body.**

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