Dietary Supplements

Athlete Scenario
I've just been called up from triple A to the Big Leagues. I've been told that to stay here I need to take dietary supplements to gain muscle, recover quickly, and improve performance. Do I need supplements? Which supplements are safe, effective, and fit within the regulations of the Major League Baseball Players Association?

Dietary Supplements: Risks vs Benefits

Proper nutrition is the first line defense for all athletes. Although benefits may exist for some dietary supplements, poor manufacturing practices, cross contamination, and illegal drugs disguised as dietary supplements can cause athletes to test positive for banned substances and result in serious consequences. Dietary supplements can also cause adverse health effects. Thus, sports organizations such as Major League Baseball (MLB), National Football League (NFL), and their players associations have partnered with companies like NSF International that test and certify dietary supplements. NSF screens supplements for banned substances (steroids, stimulants, hormones, etc.) and monitors manufacturing facilities for compliance with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Good Manufacturing Practices. Beyond safety, legality, and quality, effectiveness and proper dosage of dietary supplements need to be evaluated.

Goal: Evaluate Dietary Supplements

• Know the regulations of your sport organization (MLB/MLBPA, NFL/NFLPA, National Collegiate Athletic Association, International Olympic Committee, etc.) regarding dietary supplements.

• Access resources that test dietary supplements for quality and banned substances:
  - NSF International: www.nsf.org
  - Informed Choice: www.informed-choice.org

• Learn from organizations that provide dietary supplement information specific to athletes:
  - The National Center for Drug-Free Sport: www.drugfreesport.com
  - U.S. Anti-Doping Agency: www.usada.org

Tips to Take With You

1. Food is fuel! A well-planned diet fuels the body and enhances training, recovery, and building muscle mass.

2. Adhere to the regulations of your sport. Athletes who take dietary supplements bear full responsibility for everything they ingest.

3. Seek a sports dietitian to help you evaluate dietary supplements for safety, legality, quality, effectiveness, dosage, and application to your sport.

Contact SCAN

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