



SPORTS SUPPLEMENTS

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PLAYERS

BACKGROUND

The GAA recognises the demands of Gaelic games and indeed the training and nutrition challenges they present. The Association also recognises that there are many factors that contribute to optimal athletic performance such as genetics, training, commitment, motivation, rest and recovery, along with good nutrition and hydration practices. These factors are the cornerstone of performance therefore using a sport nutrition supplement will not substitute for a less than adequate nutrition and/or hydration strategy. Sports supplement companies use powerful marketing campaigns to imply that the use of sports supplements are essential for maximising performance; however, much of the publicity is not based on sound scientific evidence.

KEY POINTS

- ★ Vitamins, minerals, herbs, meal supplements, sports nutrition products (e.g. Protein, Creatine, BCAAs), and natural food products are all classed as supplements
- ★ Players may use them to maintain health, recover from exercise, enhance training adaptations, gain weight, burn fat and/or supplement their diet or for medical reasons
- ★ Risks with supplements are categorised in terms of health and possible doping violations?
- ★ Batch tested products are not as risky; however, no guarantee can be given on the safety of a supplement
- ★ Be aware that supplements which claim to be muscle building or fat burning are more likely to be associated with contamination
- ★ The use of supplements is not recommend for any player under the age of 18
- ★ Players should seek the opinion of a registered Sports Dietician/Nutritionist and their Team Doctor on any supplements

RISK MINIMISATION

Choosing to take a sports supplement is a balance between weighing up the risks (i.e. contamination and a potential sporting ban) against a potential exercise performance benefit. If you choose to take a supplement, make a decision after considering the following:

- ★ **Need** – Do I need additional ingredients in my diet? If so, can I get them from food?
- ★ **Risk** – If not, what risks are involved with a supplement that might help?
- ★ **Consequences** – Understand the sanctions for taking a contaminated supplement

CONTAMINATED PRODUCTS

The issue of contaminated products has been acknowledged in the new 2015 code. If a player can establish no significant fault or negligence then the sanction can range from a reprimand to a maximum of two years. To manage the risks of supplements:

- You **MUST** undertake thorough internet research of any supplement products before it is consumed.
- This search should include the name of the product and the ingredients/substances listed.
- Information revealed as a result should be further investigated and players are advised to keep evidence of their research.
- Screen shots should be taken and the results saved in a folder. All saved information should be backed up.
- Check if the product is batch tested on www.informed-sport.com.

Remember each player is personally responsible for any substances that may be found in his body, whether he intended to cheat or not. Realise that contaminated supplements may result in at least a two year ban from sport

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF SUPPLEMENTS

In order to maximise athletic performance there is no substitute for proper nutrition practices. There is very little sound scientific evidence that supports the use of the majority of sports supplements to enhance performance. However, there are a number of supplements which are supported by a large body of scientific research, which in certain situations may complement good nutrition strategies to provide a performance benefit. These supplements are listed in the table below and are adopted from the Australian Institute of Sport Classification of Supplements website.

IMPORTANT - The following supplements are supported by sound scientific evidence but should only be used in certain situations to compliment good nutritional strategies. They should be used under the instruction of a qualified sports dietician/nutritionist:

Sports Foods	Medical Supplements	Performance Supplements
<p>These foods provide a practical convenient source of nutrients when it is impractical to consume everyday foods. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Sports drinks ★ Sports gels ★ Sports confectionary ★ Liquid meals ★ Whey protein ★ Sports bars ★ Electrolyte replacements 	<p>Used to treat clinical issues and should only be used under the supervision of a qualified practitioner. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Iron supplements ★ Calcium supplements ★ Multi-vitamin/minerals ★ Vitamin D ★ Probiotics 	<p>Used to contribute to optimal performance. Should only be used in conjunction with a qualified sports nutrition practitioner as recommendations will be specific to athletics goals and nutritional practices. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ★ Caffeine ★ Creatine ★ Beta-alanine ★ Bicarbonate ★ Beetroot juice

All other sports supplements not listed in the table above need further research on whether they provide a benefit to athletic performance or they have no benefit. Remember if a product claims seem too good to be true, it probably is. It is essential that when thinking about using a sports supplement, it is done so under the guise of a trained professional such as a Sports Dietician/Nutritionist in order for best practice to be followed. Remember that there is no shortcut when it comes to nutrition and maximising performance; diet should always come first. **Supplements should never be used to substitute good nutrition practices and be aware that there is always risk associated with taking sports supplements**

BENEFITS OF A SPORTS DIETICIAN / NUTRITIONIST

A qualified practitioner such as a Sports Dietician or Sports Nutritionist will advise an athlete on how best to use food to enhance performance. Simple changes can be made to improve normal nutrition practices improving performance in many cases without the need for sports supplements. In cases where sports supplements may be of benefit to performance then a Sports Nutritionist will ensure an appropriate sports supplement plan is put in place according to the individual needs of the athlete and his/her sporting goals. Most importantly they will minimise the risk of a sports supplement containing banned substances. Find an appropriately qualified Sports Dietician/Nutritionist on the Institute of Sports website:

http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Institute-of-Sport/Athlete_Zone/Performance_Science/Professional_Members/Professional_Members.html#Nutrition

THE DO'S & DON'TS OF SPORTS SUPPLEMENTS USAGE

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Follow a dietary plan that will allow you to adapt your eating and drinking practices to maximise your performance ✦ Use the online resources provided in this document to understand the risks of taking supplements ✦ Seek the opinion of a qualified medical practitioner ✦ Choose supplements based on the ingredients that are desired after discussion with a nutritionist ✦ Gather as much information about a supplement manufacturer as possible ✦ Ensure all sports supplement choices are from brands that clearly demonstrate a batch testing and quality assurance process that is registered with and/or aligned to Informed Sports, www.Informed-Sport.com 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Take sports supplements if you are under 18 ✦ Use a sports supplement to unless you have first maximised your nutrition strategy ✦ Take a sports supplement without knowing how and why it is going to maximise your athletic performance ✦ Assume that supplements are safe, effective and necessary ✦ Take supplements that cannot clearly demonstrate a batch testing and quality assurance process that is registered with and/or aligned to Informed Sports. ✦ Take advice from someone who is not appropriately qualified in the area of sports nutrition supplementation ✦ Take for granted information in articles from obscure internet blogs as they are not regulated and/or backed by sound science

RESOURCES

All persons involved with a player including the player himself should be aware of the resources available. The following list provides a quick reference guide of credible websites for information on important issues involving dietary supplements:

→ GAA

- Official GAA Website - <http://www.gaa.ie/medical-and-player-welfare/nutrition/>
- GAA Learning and Development Portal, <http://learning.gaa.ie/player>

→ Nutrition and Dietary Supplement Information

- Irish Sports Council Supplements and Sports Foods Policy, https://www.gaa.ie/content/files/Supplements_and_Sport_Food_Policy.pdf
- Irish Institute of Sport Fact Sheets on Sports Supplements, http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Institute-of-Sport/Athlete_Zone/Sports_Nutrition_Supplements/
- Irish Institute of Sport, <http://www.instituteofsport.ie/Institute-Of-Sport/>
- Irish Nutrition Dietetic Institute, <https://www.indi.ie/>
- Australian Institute of Sport, www.ausport.gov.au/ais/nutrition

→ Drug Testing and Banned Substances Lists

- World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), www.wada-ama.org
- Eirpharm, <http://www.eirpharm.com/sports/>
- Global DRO, <http://www.globaldro.com/>

→ Purity of Dietary Supplements

- Informed Sport, www.informed-sport.com

→ Dietary Supplement Regulation

- Food Safety Authority of Ireland, <https://www.fsai.ie/>
- Food and Drug Administration, www.fda.gov

→ Research

- Pub Med, www.pubmed.com
- Sport Science, www.sportsci.org
- Journal of International Science of Sports Nutrition, www.jissn.com
- British Journal of Sports Medicine, www.bjism.com
- International Journal of Sports Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism, <http://journals.humankinetics.com/ijsnem>
- Journal of Dietary Supplements, <http://informahealthcare.com/journal/jds>

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