



## Evaluating Nutritional Supplements

**“My grandmother (aunt, mom, dad, former professional athlete) said this would be really good for me to take since I am (under a lot of stress, needing to gain/lose weight, want a competitive edge)”.....**



**I hear this kind of scenario almost daily from well meaning athletes and even their parents at times. In most cases though the intention is heart felt, the supplement claims are unproven or it is simply inappropriate for a collegiate athlete to take.**

It's best to tell all student athletes that if they are taking any non-prescription supplements of ANY kind that they check these out via their Sport Nutritionist, Athletic Trainer, Sports Medicine doctor or the [drugfreesport.com](http://drugfreesport.com) web site. The goal of all of these professional resources is to protect the safety and eligibility of the program and student athlete.

By having the sport nutritionist evaluate the supplement with the athlete, they learn how to evaluate supplements, and often end up saving a considerable amount of money that can be put towards real food fuel. Call or email me with questions re: individual supplements

Supplements that are more likely to be a positive addition to an athlete's diet but which should be suggested on an individual basis are:

A well made multivitamin	The label should show the USP or other independent testing laboratories seal of potency, content and breakdown time Men taking a multivitamin should choose one WITHOUT added iron Females should choose one that has the RDA of iron and folic acid The dosage for a multivitamin should be no more than one pill a day. Any more than that is just a marketing technique that drives up cost. Athletes should take their multivitamin with a meal
Iron	Single nutrient supplements should be prescribed by a physician. Taking excess iron without confirmation of need through laboratory testing can increase risk for iron toxicity Iron supplements are best absorbed when taken with a food high in vitamin C. High calcium intakes can decrease iron absorption, however, milk and dairy should not be avoided, instead these foods can be consumed away from the iron supplement.
Vitamin C	Habitual intakes of higher doses of vitamin C do not seem to infer protection against colds. Taking more than 3 grams (3000 mg) can cause GI upset
Calcium	Calcium is one nutrient that helps to optimize bone health. Young women (and men) need to consume adequate calcium (~1000 mg per day) and bone building nutrients like those found in dairy foods. Calcium supplements can help supply some calcium. See the high calcium foods list
Vitamin B-12	There is no clear-cut peer-reviewed scientific evidence that B-12 supplements or injections increase performance. Toxicity does not appear to be a great risk; however, it would seem that in the end it is simply a waste of money.
B-Complex	Most athletes who are well and appropriately fueled do not need to consume extra b-complex. Sometimes these vitamins are promoted as providing “energy or energy boost”. B-vitamins are involved in energy production; however, they themselves contain no energy. Some research suggests that a b-complex taken in the few days leading up to a woman's menstrual cycle can decrease symptoms of PMA in some individuals. As a water soluble vitamin though, excess is simply excreted through urine
Emergency-C, Airborne etc...	There is no scientific evidence that these supplements with claims re: preventing colds or decreasing recovery time from colds is accurate. Athletes need to be careful as some of these can contain stimulants, amino acids and other non-disclosed substances. One benefit is that they do help drive up fluid intake which does seem to help athletes bounce back from colds faster. Staying hydrated!

## Oregon State University Athletic Sports Nutrition

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As a reminder, here are the NCAA categories for nutritional supplements.

1. The banned result in loss of eligibility
2. The non-permissible supplements are not tested for, but your athletic department cannot provide or promote to coaches or student athletes.
3. Permissible nutritional supplements are OK to take and to provide but should not be promoted so that they displace athletes responsibility to eat real whole foods.

Banned	Non-permissible	Permissible
Anabolic steroid/agents Diuretics Ephedrine/Ephedrine derivatives Stimulants Caffeine Hormones (e.g. growth hormone, EPO) Narcotics Marijuana Alcohol	Amino Acids Chyrsin Chondroitin Creatine Creatine containing products Ginseng Glucosamine Glycerol HMB I-carnitin Melatonin Pos-2 Protein Powders Amino Acids Substances that contain individual amino acids	Vitamins & Minerals (e.g. Multivitamins, Iron, Calcium, B-Complex) Energy Bars Calorie-Replacement drinks (Boost, Ensure, Gatorade Shakes, individual servings of chocolate/regular milk) Electrolyte replacement drinks (Gatorade, Powerade)