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Nutritional Supplements and Athletic Performance

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In a departure from statements made in the past, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) now agrees that nutritional supplements can boost athletic performance. In the [IOC Consensus Statement on Sports Nutrition 2010](#) issued from its head office in Lausanne, Switzerland, on October 27, 2010, the organization concedes that some supplements may enhance performance for some athletes. In the past, the IOC had warned athletes against using nutritional supplements.



While the statement did not comment on specific products, it did say, “..supplements that provide essential nutrients may be a short-term option when food intake or food choices are restricted due to travel or other factors” and that they should be “used in accordance with current evidence under the guidance of a well-informed professional.” The statement went on to say, “Athletes contemplating the use of supplements and sports foods should consider their efficacy, their cost, the risk to health and performance, and the potential for a positive doping test.” Of course, the Olympic Committee correctly was not suggesting that supplements replace a nutritious diet. The statement began by saying, “Diet significantly influences athletic performance. All athletes should adopt specific nutritional strategies before, during and after training and competition to maximize their mental and physical performance.”

Recommendations with More in Common?

What is interesting is that it would appear that the IOC is moving ever so slightly toward the recommendations of the [Council for Responsible Nutrition \(CRN\)](#) with respect to achieving optimal wellness. The three pillars of wellness according to the CRN are diet, appropriate supplementation and exercise. It goes without saying that optimal physical and athletic performance is related to optimal wellness, which in turn, is related to optimal nutritional intake. I would suggest that the “other factors” mentioned above in the IOC statement in support of appropriate supplementation include poor food choices, something that studies have shown to be prevalent in the majority of the population.

Other issues raised in the IOC statement are the possible risks involved in taking supplements. These include health and doping test risks. The statement also emphasizes that supplements should be used in accordance with current evidence. These issues raise important topics for discussion. How do you decide which supplements to choose based on concerns for safety and evidence of effectiveness? These issues are in fact investigated if nutritional supplements are studied in human clinical trials that follow current Good Clinical Practice (cGCP) guidelines. In following cGCP guidelines, clinical researchers must not only measure a product’s effectiveness, they must also investigate and document the product’s safety.

Athletes are ultimately responsible for any consequences associated with the supplements they choose in terms of regulations. The best first step they can take is to make sure the supplements they choose are not formulated to contain any substances banned by anti-doping agencies. Nutritional products that are formulated in this fashion are generally safe for use without fear of failing any sport doping test.

Mannatech’s clinical research program follows current Good Clinical Practices (cGCP) guidelines for documenting both product effectiveness and safety for general use. This is in keeping with Mannatech’s stated policy of using science to develop safe, natural and innovative dietary supplements. For more details, go to the website MannatechScience.org.

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