

A SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENT USAGE AND RESOURCES

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HISTORY: The Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) developed a position statement in 1998 regarding the use of drugs, medicine, and food supplements in interscholastic sports. The IHSAA position is that school personnel, including coaches, should never dispense any drug, medication or food supplement except with extreme caution and in accordance with school district policies developed in consultation with parents, health-care professionals and senior administrative personnel of the school or school district. Use of any drug, medication or food supplement in a way not prescribed by the manufacturer should not be authorized or encouraged by school personnel, including coaches. In order to minimize health and safety risks to student-athletes, maintain ethical standards, and reduce liability risks, school personnel, including coaches, should never supply, recommend, or permit the use of any drug, medication or food supplement solely for performance-enhancing purposes. IHSAA surveyed high school athletes to evaluate usage and identify what resources the high school athlete uses in selecting supplements.

PURPOSE: To study the types of supplements utilized by high school athletes and to identify what resources the student athlete utilizes in selecting nutritional supplements.

METHODS: Subjects were all Iowa high school athletes currently enrolled in the grades 9-12. Data was obtained regarding their grade level; sex, supplements used and what the student athlete's major sources of information were regarding their use of supplements. The survey was anonymous and completed on-line. Because it was anonymous, we do not know how many different schools were represented in the results.

RESULTS: The responses (N=3,232) were comprised of male (N=1734) and female (N=1498) respondents. There was a balance of responses was obtained from all four-grade levels grade 9 - 25% (N=820) grade 10 - 24% (N=780), grade 11 - 29% (N=939), grade 12 - 22% (N=704). The most common supplement utilized is sports drinks which were used by 3,024 of the athletes (Male N=1639) Female N=1385). Less than 4% (N=115) of the athletes who responded to the survey used no supplementation. Excluding sports drinks the four most common responses for supplements by male athletes were vitamin supplements (N=674), energy enhancing products (N=526), creatine (N=302), and meal replacement bars (N=295). Excluding sports drinks the four most common responses for supplements by female athletes were vitamin supplements (N=544), energy-enhancing products (N=261), meal replacement bars (N=188), and weight loss products (N=101). For male athletes the three most common resources for supplements were friends (N=759), coaches (N=649) and parents (N=648). For female athletes the three most common resources for supplements were friends (N=749), coaches (N=529), and parents (N=529). Doctors were an infrequent resource used by females (N=196) or male athletes (N=102).

CONCLUSION:

There is a significant usage of nutritional supplements by both male and female high school athletes. Very few athletes responding to the survey do not use nutritional supplementation. Sports drinks are the most common nutritional supplement used by high school athletes. Vitamins are the most common non-sports drink nutritional supplement for both male and female athletes. The athlete's friends are the most common resource for both male and female athletes that use nutritional supplementation. Doctors were an infrequent resource used by high school athletes as a resource for nutritional supplementation usage.

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