



SUPPLEMENTS POSITION STATEMENT

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)

The NFHS Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) strongly opposes the use of dietary supplements for the purpose of athletic advantage. Research data shows widespread use of dietary supplements by adolescent and high school athletes, despite considerable safety concerns. Dietary supplements are marketed as an easy way to enhance athletic performance, increase energy levels, lose weight, and feel better. It is proven that adolescents are more susceptible to advertising messages and peer pressure, increasing the risk of dietary supplement usage. This can create a culture more concerned about short term performance rather than overall long term health.

The Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 removed dietary supplements from pre-market regulation by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Thus, many of the substances that can be obtained from nutrition stores and the internet are not subject to the same strict tests and regulations as “over the counter” and prescription medications. The companies that produce dietary supplements do not need to test their safety or effectiveness before they are available to consumers. In fact, dietary supplements cannot be removed from the marketplace unless they present a significant or unreasonable risk of illness or injury.

- **MYTHS** regarding dietary supplements:
 - If a substance is natural, it must be safe and beneficial.
 - Athletes that consume a well balanced diet still have nutritional deficiencies.
 - Since dietary supplements may be purchased at a store or over the internet, they must be safe and legal.

The NFHS SMAC discourages the use of supplements by athletes due to the lack of published, reproducible scientific research addressing the benefits and documenting long term adverse health effects of the supplements, particularly in the adolescent age group. Dietary supplements should be used only upon the advice of one’s health care provider. School personnel and coaches should never recommend, endorse or encourage the use of any dietary supplement, drug, or medication for performance enhancement.

We recommend that coaches, athletic directors, and school personnel develop strategies that address the growing concerns of using dietary supplements. Such strategies may include conversations with athletes and their parents about the potential dangers of dietary supplement use. Athletes should be encouraged to pursue their goals through hard work and good nutrition, not dietary shortcuts.

- Dietary supplements receive no FDA regulation:
 - There is no guarantee the true amount or concentration of ingredients is listed on the label.

- There is no guarantee the substance is pure, as studies have found lead and arsenic in supplements.
- There may be other compounds not listed on the label in the dietary supplement which may be illegal or banned substances.
- There is minimal evidence that dietary supplements enhance performance for most high school sports.
 - There is even less evidence supporting their use in adolescents.
- In order to help prevent dietary supplement use:
 - School personnel, coaches, and parents should allow for open discussion about supplement use, but strongly encourage optimal nutrition and a well balanced diet.
 - Remind athletes that no supplement is harmless and free from consequences.
 - Remind athletes that there is no short cut to improved performance, it takes hard work.
 - Because they are not regulated, dietary supplements may contain impurities and illegal substances not listed on the label.
 - Adolescents that use dietary supplements are more likely to use steroids, continue usage into adulthood, and to engage in other high risk behaviors like smoking, drinking, and using drugs.

References:

American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). Nutrition and Athletic Performance Position Statement. March 2009.

Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA).

www.fda.gov/opacom/laws/DSHEA.html

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National Federation of State High School Associations. <http://www.nfhs.org>.

The National Center for Drug Free Sport, Inc. <http://www.drugfreesport.com>

United States Anti-Doping Agency. <http://www.usantidoping.org/>

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