

Should my child use dietary supplements?

1. Assess the need

- Consider whether there are other non-nutritional factors non-nutritional causing the perceived sub-optimal performance (e.g., training, sleep and appropriateness of diet).
- Can the nutrient be obtained in sufficient quantities from food? The quick guides located in these fact sheets should help, as can food labels.
- Not all supplements are beneficial so try to find evidence that it is beneficial in the situation in which your child will use it. Organisations such as the AIS ([link](#)) can be a good starting point or advice from an expert (e.g., registered nutritionist or dietician)
- Current guidelines state that in the absence of a diagnosed nutrient deficiency, it is inappropriate for young athletes to take dietary supplements for performance enhancement.

2. Assess the Risk

- The consumption of some supplements may lead to a nutrient intake which exceeds the recommended safe upper limit.
- Approximately 10-15% of supplements have been found to be contaminated with prohibited substances (including anabolic steroids).
- The ingestion of some foods, medications, and supplements can lead to anti-doping rule violations. Evidence suggests that approximately 7% of anti-doping rule violations were attributed to supplement contamination.

3. Assess the Consequences

- An anti-doping rule violation can result in a 4-year period of ineligibility from sport.
- Dietary supplements can be harmful to health, especially if they contain substances not listed on the label.
- More is not always better. Some supplements, if taken in sufficient quantities, may have a negative, not positive, impact on training.
- Athletes are bound by the principle of strict liability, which means that it is the athlete's personal duty to ensure that no prohibited substance enters their body, regardless of whether it was intentional.

4. Minimise the Risk

If you and your child decide to use a supplement, these steps may help minimise risk of contamination.

1. Check it has not been labelled high risk. The following sites are useful: [Supplement 411](#)
2. Check the ingredients and compare them to the WADA prohibited list: [WADA](#)
3. Check it has been tested for banned substances. The following sites are useful:
 - [Informed Choice](#) / [Informed Sport](#)
 - [Cologne List](#) / [NZVT](#) / [NSF](#)
4. Consult your own national anti-doping organisations website for more information: [NADO](#)
5. Keep a record of your search as evidence