

IOC convenes a three-day meeting to discuss the use of dietary supplements, their use and effects

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The International Olympic Medical and Scientific Commission has recognized the important role that sound nutrition practices play in protecting good health and promoting the optimum performance of athletes. As part of its commitment to supporting the health and performance of athletes, it convened a meeting of experts in the field of dietary supplements to assess the evidence relating to the place of dietary supplements in the preparations of elite athletes. Particular focus was placed on their effects on athletes' health and performances, and the risk of contamination with substances that may be harmful to health or that may trigger an adverse analytical finding, leading to an anti-doping rule violation.



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The use of dietary supplements is widespread among elite athletes, as it is among the general population. The expert group concluded, after three days of intensive discussions, that:

- Diet significantly influences athletic performance, but the use of supplements does not compensate for poor food choices and an inadequate diet.

- Supplementation with essential nutrients may be beneficial if a specific nutrient deficiency is medically diagnosed and a food-based solution cannot be easily implemented.
- A few supplements, from the many thousands of different products on the market, may provide performance or health-related benefits for some athletes in some types of sports, when optimum training, nutrition and recovery are already achieved.
- Quality assurance in supplement manufacture, storage and distribution is sometimes not strictly enforced, leading to products that are of poor quality or contaminated.

Athletes contemplating the use of supplements and sports foods should consider their efficacy, their cost, the risk to health and performance, and the possibility that undeclared contaminants present in some supplements may cause an adverse analytical finding.

The protection of athletes' health and an awareness of the potential for harm must be paramount, and expert professional advice should be sought before embarking on supplement use.

The consensus statement will be published in January 2018 (online in December 2017) in the British Journal of Sports Medicine and on www.olympic.org.

Source: [Olympic.org](http://olympic.org)