



FOOD FOR RUGBY

SUPPLEMENTS & CLEAN SPORT

“

The use of supplements will never compensate for poor food choices or an inadequate diet.

”



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01. FOOD FIRST

A “food first” approach should always be the foundation of every athlete’s diet. Eating a variety of whole, nutrient-dense foods will ensure that you are consuming the right balance and amount of nutrients to support optimal performance. Check out the [Nutrition Fundamentals](#) toolkit if you are not sure what that looks like!

“Food first” is a concept that emphasises the importance of meeting nutritional needs primarily through foods, rather than relying on supplements. In a recent publication, food first was described in a sports nutrition context as:

“where practically possible, nutrient provision for athletes should come from whole foods and drinks rather than from isolated food components or dietary supplements”.

It is important to note that the words “where practically possible” are an important part of this definition.

Due to the high energy and nutrient demands placed on athletes, especially in rugby players, the intake of food might not always be the most convenient or adequate form of providing the nutrients needed. Therefore, in a few situations where the intake of food is not practical, it is acceptable to consider the intake of sports supplements (providing that a comprehensive risk minimisation strategy is implemented). These situations include:

- 1** When some nutrients are difficult to obtain in sufficient quantities in foods eaten as part of a regular diet, at least without excessive intake of foods containing these dietary components.
e.g. creatine and beta alanine in red meat and vitamin D in oily fish.
- 2** When some essential nutrients are abundant only in foods that some athletes do not consume.
e.g. omega 3 found predominantly in oily fish, or vitamin B12 in meat.
- 3** To obtain a more precise amount of a nutrient that has been consistently shown to enhance sporting performance and/or health.
e.g. caffeine, nitrate, vitamin D.

- 4** When food sources may be impractical or difficult to consume close to, during or soon after exercise.
e.g. a carbohydrate gel may be more convenient during the second half of a rugby game than eating a banana.
- 5** When tested supplements could provide a safer and more convenient alternative to food, particularly in scenarios where concerns are raised regarding food contamination and/or food hygiene.
e.g. contamination of meat with clenbuterol.
- 6** When high doses of some nutrients may be required to improve health or exceeding the reference nutrient intake for some nutrients may have beneficial effects.
e.g. iron supplementation to correct deficiency.



02. SPORTS SUPPLEMENTS

KEEP IN MIND: *The use of supplements will never compensate for poor food choices or an inadequate diet.*





SPORTS SUPPLEMENTS

“Supplements are defined as foods, food components, nutrients or non-food compounds that are purposefully ingested in addition to the habitually consumed diet with the aim of achieving a specific health and/or performance benefit”.

IOC Consensus Statement

RISKS OF SUPPLEMENT USE

While some supplements can provide some performance benefits, their use also carries inherent risks. These include:

-  Positive doping tests due to supplement contamination
-  Negative effects on performance
-  Adverse health effects
-  High financial cost

Players contemplating using supplements should be aware of the risks and be able to make well informed decisions.

MINIMISING THE RISK

Athletes should be extremely cautious about using supplements. Below are some recommendations to minimise risk of **inadvertent doping** from supplement use:

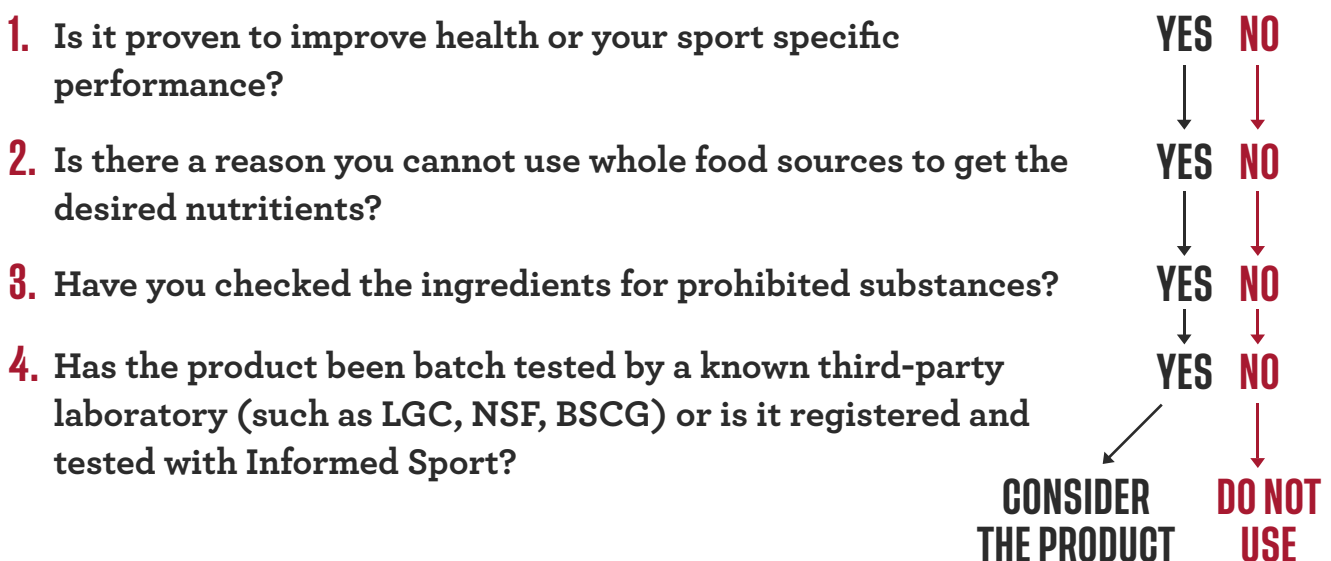
- ! Only seek and accept advice on the use of supplements from suitably qualified experts. A list of those with appropriate expertise to advise can be found on **The Sport and Exercise Nutrition Register (SENr)**.
- ! Avoid products making exaggerated claims or using the following words: **stimulant, muscle booster, enhancer, legal, alternate steroid, extreme,**

blast, weight loss. Even if no prohibited substance is listed on the label, the product may contain.

- ❗ Be wary of herbal supplements as they are especially high risk. Natural does not mean safe and free from prohibited substances.
- ❗ Avoid products containing multiple ingredients as there is a higher risk for contamination.
- ❗ If using supplements, only use products from reputable sources and under quality assurance programs. For example **Informed sport**, NZTV, NSF, the Cologne List. Ask for proof of certification and keep a copy with you.
- ❗ When searching on the batch testing websites, ensure that both the product and the specific batch are present before consuming and keep a record of the search. Some supplement companies have been known to use the Informed Sport or other testing logos without actually testing the product and it is therefore crucial that rugby players seek specialist advice on all supplements, even those bearing a batch testing logos.
- ❗ Seek guidance from anti-doping organisations about recent information or dangerous products.
- ❗ Keep your supplements stored in a safe place.

We must stress that batch testing reduces the risk of a product containing prohibited substances. However, there is no 100% guarantee that any product is safe and a player would still be liable if a finding resulted from the use of a batch tested product.

When considering supplements we recommend that you follow the: **Supplements Use Decision Tree.**






03. USING SUPPLEMENTS

Sports foods and supplements can play a small but important role in the sports nutrition plans of high-performance athletes. Supplements can be classified in different categories:

- a. Sport foods
- b. Performance supplements
- c. Health supplements

SUPPLEMENTS FOR RUGBY







	 ENERGY AND RECOVERY	 STRENGTH	 GENERAL HEALTH
SPORT FOODS	Carbohydrate gels Sport drinks	Protein powders (whey protein)	Electrolyte supplements
PERFORMANCE SUPPLEMENTS	Caffeine Beta alanine	Creatine	Collagen
HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS			Probiotics Vitamin D (if deficient) Calcium (if deficient) Iron (if deficient)

Only a small number of supplements are proven to provide some performance benefits. Rugby players can consider the following supplements:








A. SPORTS FOOD

Specialised food products used to provide a convenient source of nutrients when it is impractical to consume everyday foods:

-  Sports drinks
-  Sports gels
-  Sports bars
-  Protein powders
-  Electrolyte supplements
-  Mixed macronutrient / meal replacement supplements





B. PERFORMANCE SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements that can support sporting performance.

-  Caffeine
-  Beta alanine
-  Creatine
-  Sodium bicarbonate
-  Nitrates / beetroot

C. HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS

Supplements used to support health and/or prevent or treat diagnosed nutrient deficiencies.

-  Vitamin D
-  Iron
-  Calcium
-  Probiotics

Many other supplements are available in the market but these are either not permitted in sport or their use is not supported by science.

04. REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

USEFUL LINKS

UKAD website: to find important education antidoping resources, and athlete support in the UK.

WADA website: to find everything related to antidoping rules and regulations.

GLOBALDRO: to check if a drug or medication is allowed in your sport (in and out of competition).

Informed Sports: to search and verify for tested supplements.

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Supplements & Clean Sport is published by England Rugby.

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