

# Dietary Supplement or Conventional Food?

## Athlete Scenerio

*As an athlete, I know that using dietary supplements can be risky for my health and possibly cause me to test positive for banned substances. How can I tell the difference between dietary supplements and conventional foods?*

## Dietary supplements versus food—Know the facts!

- The US government strictly regulates foods for ingredients, additives, manufacturing practices, safety, and packaging.
- Under the Dietary Supplement Health Education Act (DSHEA) dietary supplements **are not** required to be registered with or obtain pre-market approval by FDA, providing no assurance of purity, safety, or effectiveness.
- FDA must show that a supplement is “unsafe” before removing it from the market. Before bringing a supplement to market, manufacturers are not required to share with consumers or FDA any information on safety or effectiveness of supplements.
- Dietary supplements may cause adverse health effects and a positive test for banned substances.

## How to play it safe

- Understand that athletes are responsible for all that they ingest.
- Check trusted resources that test dietary supplements: NSF International ([www.NSF.org](http://www.NSF.org)), US Pharmacopia ([www.USP.org](http://www.USP.org)), Informed Choice ([www.informed-choice.org](http://www.informed-choice.org)). Strict FDA regulation of foods makes independent testing for additives in foods unnecessary.
- Read the label closely. Only foods have a Nutrition Facts label. Dietary supplements have a Supplements Facts label and a disclaimer: “This statement has not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent disease.”
- Consult a registered dietitian (RD) who specializes in sports, particularly a Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD), for advice on choosing safe supplements and customizing your nutrition plan. Find a SCAN RD at [www.scandpg.org](http://www.scandpg.org).

Written by SCAN registered dietitians (RDs). The key to optimal meal planning for athletes is individualization. For personalized nutrition plans contact a SCAN sports dietitian or Board Certified Specialist in Sports Dietetics (CSSD) by accessing “Find a SCAN Dietitian” at [www.scandpg.org](http://www.scandpg.org) | 800.249.2875.

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## Tips to Take With You

1. Food first! A well-designed diet will safely supply energy and nutrients to fuel the body, enhance training, build muscle, and promote optimal performance.
2. When additional nutrition and hydration are needed, first supplement your meals with foods and beverages that have a Nutrition Facts label. Sports drinks, bars, and gels can be useful in supplementing an athlete’s diet.
3. Know and adhere to the regulations of your sport’s governing body. Athletes are fully responsible for all they ingest.

## Contact SCAN

Web site: [www.scandpg.org](http://www.scandpg.org)  
Voice: 800.249.2875