

USE OF DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS BY FOOTBALL PLAYERS

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Dietary supplements are widely used by the Australian community (Australian Bureau of Statistics 1979). Athletes are a segment of the community whose use of dietary supplements might be expected to be high because of the frequently held view that supplements such as vitamins will improve athletic performance. A recent study (Aust. Sports Med. Federation 1983) used a questionnaire approach to survey the use of drugs and dietary supplements by athletes. Since the results obtained by means of a questionnaire may be selective in terms of those who choose to respond, it is of interest to compare results obtained by a separate method.

In this study, the use of vitamins and other ergogenic aids by football players was investigated by interview. Forty seven players from the professional league in Victoria were interviewed and the following results obtained.

<u>Supplement type</u>	<u>Number of players using</u>
Multivitamin and mineral preparation.	9
Vitamin B complex or B complex and vitamin C.	7
Vitamin C	7
Multivitamin preparation; intravenous route.	1
Vitamins and mild stimulant preparation.	4
Multivitamins and iron 'tonic'.	1
Minerals preparation.	1
Protein and multivitamin mixture.	1
Liquid meals such as 'Sustagen'.	6
Glucose powder regularly with meals.	3
Glucose tablets prior to a match.	14
Salt tablets.	5

Twenty-eight players (60%) used some kind of dietary supplement during the season; 19 (40%) used vitamins and four reported using a vitamin and mild stimulant mixture. Most usage was sporadic, only six players reporting a regular regime of vitamin supplementation.

The most common reasons given for the use of vitamins and minerals reflected a belief in general health benefits and compensation for 'poor' eating habits.

Only two players took vitamins as a specific ergogenic aid prior to play and one identified a particular vitamin, thiamin, as being beneficial. Five players reported use of salt tablets to reduce cramps, though only one player used them regularly on the evening before and on the day of play. Glucose tablets were more widely used prior to play, by seven players regularly and seven occasionally. A drink containing glucose and electrolytes ('Gatorade') was provided by the club for fluid replacement during and after the game and was generally used. No player used supplements specifically for body building though glucose powder was used as a sugar substitute at home by three players and a protein and vitamin mixture by one.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (1979). 'Australian Health Survey, 1977-1978', (Catalogue No. 4311, Australian Bureau of Statistics: Canberra).

Australian Sports Medicine Federation (1983). 'Survey of Drug Use in Australian Sport'. (A.S.M.F., 381 Royal Parade, Parkville, Victoria 3052).

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