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Performance Level Affects the Dietary Supplement Intake of Both Individual and Team Sports Athletes

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ABSTRACT

Dietary supplement (DS) intake is high in elite level athletes, however few studies have investigated the impact that the performance level of the athletes has on supplementation intake in individual and team sports. The purpose of the study was to determine and compare the DS intake among individual and team sport athletes of various performance levels. A total of 2845 participants (athletes: 2783, controls: 62) between the ages of 11 and 44 years old participated in the study. A 3-page questionnaire was developed to assess the intake of DS. Athletes were categorized based on participation in individual (n = 775) and team sports (n = 2008). To assess the effect of performance level in supplementation intake, athletes were categorized based on training volume, participation in the national team, and winning at least one medal in provincial, national, international or Olympic games. Overall, 37% of all athletes of various performance levels reported taking at least one DS in the last month. A higher prevalence of DS intake was reported in individual (44%) compared to team sport athletes (35%) (p < 0.001). Athletes of high performance level reported greater DS intake compared to lower performance athletes. Males reported a significantly greater prevalence of DS intake compared to females. The most popular supplement reported was amino acid preparation with the main reason of supplementation being endurance improvements. In conclusion, performance level and type of sport appear to impact the DS practices of male and female athletes. These findings should be validated in other populations.

Key words: Nutritional aids, sports, team sports, performance

Key Points

- 37% of Mediterranean athletes of various sports and levels have reported taking dietary supplements.
- The performance level of the athletes affects the dietary supplementation intake.
- Athletes in individual sports appear to have a higher DS intake compared to team sport

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