



# The Facts About Better Sports Performance

## Performance-enhancing supplements are not the way to go.

Getting involved in sports has many great benefits. Playing sports can keep you strong, healthy, and happy. It's natural to want to keep improving your sports performance through training and good nutrition. But it's important to know that taking performance-enhancing supplements is **not** the way to go.

Performance-enhancing supplements are substances (pills, powders, bars, or shakes) that some people use to try to boost athletic performance. Some athletes think they will gain more energy, increase muscle mass, or change how they look. These supplements may look tempting, but they can cause serious problems.

Supplements are not regulated by the FDA, the government agency that oversees food and drugs. This means that no one knows for sure what they contain or how they may affect your health. Be a skeptic: Do not assume that supplements are safe. Studies show that some supplements contain substances that can hurt your body and damage your health.

Plus, research shows that most performance-enhancing supplements are not actually as good as they claim at making you stronger, leaner, or faster.

<b>Buyer Beware.</b>		
<b>Most performance-enhancing supplements don't work.</b>		
<b>Some can cause serious health problems!</b>		
Here are 5 popular supplements and some of the health problems they can cause:		
<b>Supplement</b>	<b>Serious Side Effects</b>	
<b>andro</b> (androstenedione)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Men may develop breasts</li> <li>• Increased risk of heart problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drop in the amount of the kind of cholesterol that's good for your heart</li> </ul>
<b>creatine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stomach problems like diarrhea, vomiting, and nausea</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible risk of having kidney problems</li> </ul>
<b>chromium</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible risk of having kidney and liver problems</li> </ul>	
<b>ephedra</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased risk of stroke, heart attack, and seizures</li> <li>• High blood pressure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent disability</li> <li>• Death</li> <li>• Brain damage</li> </ul>
<b>protein and amino acid supplements</b> (such as powders, shakes, and some bars)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dehydration</li> <li>• Painful arthritis</li> <li>• Liver and kidney problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stomach problems like diarrhea, bloating, and water loss</li> </ul>

## A note about energy drinks

An energy drink may seem like a good way to get an extra boost before a practice or a game. But be careful. Having one every once in a while is fine, but drinking too many energy drinks too often can hurt your game. Here's why:

- Extra sugar and calories in energy drinks can lead to weight gain and tooth decay.
- Energy drinks contain a lot of caffeine. This can cause headaches, upset stomachs, and make it hard to sleep.
- Some energy drinks contain ingredients that haven't been tested by the FDA. These ingredients may be harmful to your health.
- Energy drinks are expensive! You can save money and get a better burst of energy by eating a whole wheat bagel with cream cheese.

## What are healthy ways to boost your sports performance?

1. **Eat healthy food**, including carbohydrates (starches), protein, dairy, fruits and vegetables, and healthy fats like nuts or avocados.
2. **Get your protein from food** sources such as fish, chicken, and beans, instead of using protein supplements. The quality of protein in food is usually better than the quality of protein in supplements.
3. **Make safe, effective aerobic exercise** (running, walking, swimming, or active sports), strength training, and stretching part of your routine.
4. **Avoid power lifting** until you are at least 16 years old and have your doctor's OK.
5. **Be careful about over-training** and exercising too much, which can lead to injuries.

If you want more information about performance enhancing supplements or healthy ways to train, please contact your doctor.

## Additional Resources about performance enhancing supplements:

- Nemours Foundation: Teen Health, Sport Supplements  
[kidshealth.org/teen/exercise/sports/sports\\_supplements.html](http://kidshealth.org/teen/exercise/sports/sports_supplements.html)
- Mayo Clinic: Fitness, Performance-Enhancing Drugs  
[mayoclinic.com/health/performance-enhancing-drugs/HQ01105](http://mayoclinic.com/health/performance-enhancing-drugs/HQ01105)
- FDA: Health Information for Teens  
[fda.gov/oc/opacom/kids/html/7teens.htm](http://fda.gov/oc/opacom/kids/html/7teens.htm)

## Other resources

- Connect to our Web site at [kp.org](http://kp.org) to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, and other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.