Red-Flags and Caution Steps for Dietary Supplementation

Since they are not well regulated, the SNC sports medicine staff does not support the use of dietary supplements for our student-athletes. Student-athletes have tested positive and lost their eligibility using dietary supplements. Many dietary supplements are contaminated with banned drugs not listed on the label. Any product containing a dietary supplement is taken at your own risk. In short, buyer-beware.

Red-flags that make a product suspicious (keep away from products with the following):

- Claims to quickly improve health or performance.
- Claims of a secret or magical ingredient or formula.
- Lists that divide food into “good” and “bad” substances.
- A recent “discovery” not available from any other source.
- Advertized mainly by use of anecdotes or testimonials.
- Uses oversimplified conclusions that come from a complex scientifically designed study.
- Advertized in a health or sports magazine whose publishers also sell nutritional ads.
- Feature popular personalities or star athletes in its ads.
- Using results of a single study or using research from the supplement manufacturer, or uses studies that have been published without peer review.
- Be aware of studies that present recommendations from studies that have not compared different reactions among individuals or groups.
- If the claims seem too good to be true…they usually are.

Ways to decrease your risk and things to look for if choosing a supplement:

- Make sure the supplement (or ingredient) is not banned by the NCAA (check Resource Exchange Center (REC) website at www.drugfreesport.com or see SNC sports medicine staff to investigate). During login, organization is “NCAAIII” and password is “ncaa3.”

- Make sure there is evidence of safety (check FDA for recalls or complaints at www.fda.gov/food/dietarysupplements).
• Make sure there is evidence of 3rd-party verification for truth in labeling and no banned substances (verified by an organization that has NO association with the product, such as the National Sanitation Foundation (NSF), the U.S. Pharmacopeial (USP), ConsumerLabs.com, Informed-Choice.org, etc). Look for their logos on the product. Beware of companies that use the same initials as the actual organizations in order to trick you into thinking it has been tested by posting a fake logo. Below are the official logos.

• Make sure there is evidence of efficacy (proven by independent testing organizations during clinical trials that the substance actually has a biological effect).

• Note research-based dosage and applications (need to use the same dosage and apply it as the research has done in order to get the same results).

• Go to the United States Anti-Doping Agency’s (UDADA) website for additional information and videos at www.usada.org/supplement411. This website also posts lists of products that have tested positive for banned substances.