



SUPPLEMENT SENSE OR NON-SENSE?

Let's face it. Runners and walkers are competitive, and part of being competitive is looking for that competitive edge. Buying the right shoe, wearing the right clothing and eating the right food are all part of the training process. So, where do supplements fit in? Let's take a look at a few that are commonly used.

Creatine: There have been over 300+ studies done and the results are mixed as to it's effectiveness. It would appear that there are some persons who are "responders" for whom creatine supplementation is effective. Others are "non-responders". Overall, the studies show the side effects are mild and few, and are not linked to cramps, injuries or heat illness.

Caffeine: Moderate doses of less than 6 mg/kg, (less than 1/4 cup of coffee), taken one hour prior to start or even late in a long distance race can be beneficial and do not appear to cause dehydration. Because individual response to caffeine varies, you should experiment during training. Also, beware of energy drinks because of the inconsistency in caffeine content.

Vitamins & Minerals: Exercise increases the production of free radicals which can lead to muscle fatigue and injury. While antioxidant vitamins and minerals combat free radicals, research supporting antioxidant supplementation to improve athletic performance is limited. Consuming a diet rich in fruits and vegetables is still the best way to get those vitamins and minerals.

There are many supplements on the market, and only a few have been touched on here. Some are safe and others are not. When considering a supplement, don't take the marketing hype at face value. Take some time to do research on the supplement or ask a nutrition/sports medicine expert. Feel free to contact Nancy Stamp, RD, LD @ nstamp@cinci.rr.com.