



Should Creatine Supplements Be Banned?

Many athletes now use a dietary supplement called creatine to enhance their performance. Creatine may improve athletic performance but critics point to potentially serious side effects as a reason to control its use.

Although muscle cells contain only enough ATP for a few seconds of intense activity, most have a reserve nearly twice as large in the form of a molecule called creatine phosphate. When the muscle goes to work and starts to use up its available ATP, phosphates are transferred from creatine phosphate directly to ADP, regenerating ATP in a matter of milliseconds. The more creatine phosphate a muscle contains, the longer it can sustain intense activity. Hoping to increase their capacity for strong, short-term muscle contractions, many athletes have added creatine to their diets. Should athletes be allowed to use creatine supplements?

The Viewpoints

Creatine Supplements Should Be Allowed

Creatine is a natural substance found in human cells and in foods such as meat. Taken in recommended doses, creatine helps build muscle strength and performance, which can mean the difference between winning and losing. When athletes have followed instructions on container labels, no serious side effects have been reported. The risks are small and the rewards of winning are large enough to justify its use.

Creatine Supplements Should Be Banned

Like any natural substance, creatine can be abused. Creatine is known to cause water loss, putting the athletes who use it at risk for dehydration, muscle injury, diarrhea, kidney failure, and perhaps even death. Because creatine is considered a dietary supplement and not a drug, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has never determined its safety. Until a truly safe dose has been determined by careful scientific studies, athletes should not be allowed to use creatine.

You Decide

1. **Defining the Issue** In your own words, describe at least two major issues involved in the controversy surrounding the use of creatine to enhance athletic performance.
2. **Analyzing the Viewpoints** List the key arguments expressed by the proponents and critics of using creatine as a dietary supplement. What is known? What is not known? What are the benefits? What are the risks?

3. **Forming Your Opinion** Should athletes be allowed to take creatine to enhance performance? Weigh the pro and con arguments. Research to find out if some professional sports have banned the use of creatine by athletes. What were the reasons for this decision? Do some arguments outweigh others? Which arguments? Explain your answer.
4. **Writing an Editorial** Write an editorial for a sports magazine that takes a stand on creatine. Your editorial should persuade your readers that your opinion is justified.

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