

# Dietary supplement usage among users and visitors of the Dutchbodybuilding.com forum

ten Hoeve AL

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## Introduction

Many ergogenic substances, compounds that are supposed to enhance physical performance, have been used widely by athletes<sup>[1]</sup>. Some of these compounds are being marketed as dietary supplements.

The purpose of this report is to assess the usage of and views on several dietary supplements among users and visitors of the forum of Dutchbodybuilding.com<sup>[2]</sup>.

## Methods

A link to the questionnaire was posted in one of the sub-forums. Questions included sociodemographic information, information sources, views on dietary supplement use, history of use and a fatigue scale based on VVV (Dutch: Verkorte VermoeidheidsVragenlijst)<sup>[3]</sup>. A total of 36 completed the survey.

## Results

Most of the respondents were male and older than 18 years. More than half of the respondents had some form of higher education (polytechnic or university). Just 8.3 % has ever been treated by a CAM-therapist (Complementary and Alternative Medicine). Of the respondents who have taken a dietary supplement this year for at least a week, almost 90 % have taken some sort of protein supplement, more than 60 % creatine, and one half a multivitamin supplement. The mean of the degree the respondents assign to the health risk dietary supplements pose to the general population, on a scale of 1 (lowest) – 100 (highest), is 16.9.

## Discussion

Although the number of respondents was low, it is safe to assume that most of the visitors and members of the Dutchbodybuilding.com forum have used some type of dietary supplements for at least one week this year. Protein supplements seem to be very popular, as is creatine. In light of the physical strain most respondents probably are

under, the fatigue score is quite low. It is however concerning that almost 1/5th has used hormones that were not prescribed by a physician, since their alleged harmful effect on health and illegality in most jurisdictions.

Table 1. Summary of the survey results

	%/mean (n/s.d.)	
Male	88.9 %	(32)
Age	21.9	(5.4)
Highest reached education level:		
Primary education or lower	2.8 %	(1)
Secondary education	25.0 %	(9)
Vocational education	19.4 %	(7)
Higher education	52.8 %	(19)
Gross income (annually):		
< € 25 000	72.2 %	(26)
€ 25 000 - € 50 000	19.5 %	(7)
> € 50 000	8.3 %	(3)
Under treatment by a physician	13.9 %	(5)
Ever treated by CAM-therapist	8.3 %	(3)
Supplement use <sup>a</sup>		
Whey, other protein supplement	88.9 %	(32)
Creatine	61.1 %	(22)
Multivitamin	50.0 %	(18)
Fatty acids (eg. ω-3)	30.6 %	(11)
Information source: internet	91.7 %	(33)
Health risk supplements pose to the population (1-100, 100=highest)	16.9	(25.2)
VVV fatigue score	13.3	(3.9)
Hormone use <sup>b</sup>	19.4 %	(7)
Serious side effects of hormone use	71.4 %	(5)

a. At least for 1 week this year. b. Not prescribed by a physician.

1. Calfee R, Fadale P. *Popular ergogenic drugs and supplements in young athletes*. Pediatrics 2006 Mar;117(3):e577-89
2. <http://forum.dutchbodybuilding.com>
3. Alberts M et al. *'Verkorte vermoeidheidsvragenlijst': een praktisch hulpmiddel bij het scoren van vermoeidheid*. Nederlands Tijdschrift voor de Geneeskunde 1997 Aug 141(31)