

Super-Fortified Vitamins

By Reg P. Wydeven
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Our family loves the Milwaukee Brewers. While they've been down lately, we were thrilled when they made the playoffs in 2009 and 2011. When my kids and I play catch in the yard, we pretend to be players on the Brewers. My spry, reckless and speedy son gets to be Carlos Gomez, my cerebral and fundamentally sound daughter gets to be Jonathon Lucroy, and I get to be Prince Fielder, but without the power or hitting ability. In other words, just hefty.

We all used to fight to be Ryan Braun, but not anymore. Even though they're little, my kids were really affected. They were so disappointed to learn that he took performance enhancing drugs. We are all sad to learn that our favorite player cheated.

Unfortunately, he's not alone. His MVP and his legacy, along with those of Lance Armstrong, Alex Rodriguez, Mark McGuire and others will always be tainted. Many players, such as Manny Ramirez, claimed they inadvertently tested positive for banned substances because they didn't know they could be found in supplements or other medicines they were taking. The rule in most major sports, however, says that any positive test can be punishable, as the players are responsible for knowing what's going into their bodies.

It seemed like every player who got busted for a PED claimed he didn't know he was taking it. While this excuse seems unbelievably flimsy, it's actually quite possible.

Many athletes take vitamin B supplements. Naturally found in proteins, such as fish, poultry, meat, eggs, dairy products and some leafy greens and vegetables, vitamin B helps the body make energy. Because it also aids in the formation of red blood cells, many people take vitamin B supplements to avoid becoming anemic.

Recently, however, some consumers complained of side effects from taking vitamin B supplements, such as fatigue, muscle cramping and pain. The Federal Drug Administration received almost 30 such complaints. Of these, some men also suffered impotence and low testosterone, while some women reported unusual hair growth and missed menstrual cycles.

Lab tests also revealed users experienced abnormal liver and thyroid function and higher cholesterol levels. Lab tests performed by the FDA also indicated that the vitamin B supplements contained mesthasterone and dimethazine, two steroids that were not listed as ingredients on the label.

The vitamin B supplement in question is Healthy Life Chemistry By Purity First B-50. As a result, the FDA issued a warning to consumers that the product may contain anabolic steroids. In a statement released by the FDA, Howard Sklamberg, director of the Office of Compliance in the FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research, said, "Products marketed as a vitamin but which contain undisclosed steroids pose a real danger to consumers and are illegal."

According to the FDA, Mira Health Products Ltd., the manufacturer of the supplement, has so far refused to issue a voluntary recall of the product or to warn its customers about the risk. In response, the FDA may take legal action, including, seizure, injunction, and possibly criminal prosecution.

The FDA advised consumers and doctors to report any adverse reactions from the supplement to the agency's MedWatch program.

After playing catch in the yard, I suffered from muscle cramping and pain. I attributed it to getting old, but now I'm thinking someone is slipping me vitamin B supplements.