



ROWING AUSTRALIA

SPORTS FOODS, MEDICAL AND PERFORMANCE SUPPLEMENT POLICY

Last Reviewed	February 2026
Next Review	December 2029
Responsible Officer	Principal Medical Officer
Applicable Legislation	NA
Relevant Policies	Improper Use of Drugs & Medicine Policy
Related Documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Institute of Sport Sports Supplement Framework• Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physician's (ACSEP) position statement on the use of sport supplements

1. Background

Rowing Australia is committed to safeguarding the health and performance of its athletes by promoting safe, ethical, and evidence-based practices in sports nutrition. The use of sports foods, medical and performance supplements can play a role in supporting health, training, recovery, and competition, but it also carries risks—including potential health consequences, anti-doping violations, and financial costs.

To address these concerns, Rowing Australia has developed a comprehensive Sports Foods, Medical and Performance Supplement Policy (Policy) that details the appropriate use, approval processes, and categories of supplements permissible within its high-performance programs.

This policy is underpinned by the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) Supplement Framework, which classifies supplements into four categories (A, B, C, and D) based on their scientific evidence, safety, and efficacy. It also follows the AIS Sports Science Sports Medicine (SSSM) Best Practice Principles, which emphasise integrity, informed decision-making, and professional oversight in all aspects of supplement use. The policy aligns with the Improper Use of Drugs and Medicines policy, which forms part of the National Integrity Framework.

The Rowing Australia Sports Foods, Medical and Performance Supplement Policy (Policy) ensures that RA continues to provide an environment that maintains the highest standards of integrity



within the sport whilst delivering world class performances through the appropriate use of supplements and sports foods.

1.1. Guidance for School aged and Developing Athletes

In addition to providing a framework for the use of sports supplements by appropriate high performance rowers this Policy provides guidance to school aged and developing athletes regarding sports foods, including recommendations on the international experience and expert advice required for the use of sports supplements.

Unfortunately, Rowing Australia sees numerous examples of junior, school aged and developing athletes adopting supplement practices that are not supported by sound science, are not applicable to rowing and which provide no performance benefit.

Furthermore, the potential consequences of inappropriate or improper use of sports supplements include:

- a small but real risk of a positive doping outcome;
- money being wasted on products that simply do not work; and
- time, money and energy being diverted from the factors that can really enhance health, performance and recovery.

Instead of pursuing supplementation practices that are of questionable benefit and which may have serious consequences, RA recommends that junior, school aged and developing athletes focus on improving their rowing performance through better training, better nutrition and better recovery. We believe that this could yield a significant improvement in performance just by doing the simple things better and with more intent. RA seeks to ensure that the early years of athlete development should focus on improving rowing performance, rather than on external supplements or ergogenic aids and we do not support their use in this cohort.

2. **Policy Purpose**

2.1. Athletes are ultimately responsible for their decisions around supplement use. The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance on the appropriate use of Sports foods, Medical and Performance Supplement within rowing, and to provide a framework for the provision and administration of sports supplements, limited to those Senior and U23 high performance athletes for whom sports supplements may be appropriate.

2.2. By this Policy Rowing Australia's aims to:

- 2.2.1. provide a framework for the provision and administration of sports supplements to those appropriate Senior and U23 high performance athlete for whom an approved sports supplementation plan can be of benefit;
- 2.2.2. allow those athletes to focus on sound use of supplements and sports foods as part of their holistic performance plan;
- 2.2.3. ensure that supplements and sports foods are used correctly and appropriately to deliver maximum benefits to health and wellbeing performance, and recovery;

- 2.2.4. minimise the risk of supplement use leading to an inadvertent doping offence; and
- 2.2.5. provide clear decision-making guidelines to ensure the most appropriate use of supplements both in training and competition by those athletes.

3. Policy and Position Statements

- 3.1. RA has adopted the [Improper Use of Drugs and Medicine](#) policy as part of its commitment to the National Integrity Framework(NIF). This policy applies to all participants within Rowing, including athletes, coaches, medical personnel, and support staff. It sets clear standards regarding the safe and ethical use of supplements and medications in sport and prohibits practices that may endanger health, performance, or the integrity of competition.
- 3.2. RA endorses the Australian Institute of Sport Sports Supplement Framework and the Australasian College of Sport and Exercise Physician's (ACSEP) position statement on the use of sport supplements, including:
 - 3.2.1. All sports supplementation programs should be based on the three principles of:
 - 3.2.1.1. Athlete safety;
 - 3.2.1.2. Evidence-based science; and
 - 3.2.1.3. Compliance with the WADA Code;
 - 3.2.2. Sports supplementation is not required by all high-performance athletes and is not required by the vast majority of recreational athletes in the general community;
 - 3.2.3. Sport supplementation should only take place on the advice of a qualified sports dietitian, physician or other appropriately trained practitioner with experience in prescription of supplements for sporting purposes; and
 - 3.2.4. Situations where individuals under the age of 18 would be required to use dietary nutritional supplements for sporting purposes are rare. Parents and responsible adults, including coaches, should seek guidance from appropriately qualified professionals before allowing children to take supplements.
- 3.3. If used in an appropriate way, in conjunction with sound nutrition principles and in accordance with this Policy, supplements have the potential to maximise benefits to the health, recovery and athletic performance of appropriate Senior and U23 high performance athletes competing at the pinnacle of International rowing, and who have maximised the performance advantages available through optimised training, nutrition and recovery.

4. RA Supplementation Programme

- 4.1. The RA Supplementation Programme provides the framework through which appropriate senior high-performance athletes who are members of or preparing at the NTC/SIS/SAS propose the use of performance supplements within their holistic performance plans, and the process by which such applications will be assessed, approved (or otherwise), and reviewed by relevantly qualified experts. The RA Supplementation Programme shall also provide the Board

of RA at all times with transparent oversight of the supplementation programs being administered for appropriate high performance Senior athletes.

- 4.2. For the avoidance of doubt, the RA Supplementation Programme is intended to provide the process by which only those appropriate high-performance athletes who are members of or preparing at the NTC/SIS/SAS can make application for the use of performance supplements. Members of the general rowing community, junior, school aged and developing athletes should retain a focus on maximising the benefits provided by completing the basics of rowing correctly and avoid the use of supplements.
- 4.3. Supplements may only be used if there are no medical contraindications to an individual athlete using that supplement.
- 4.4. Where athletes choose to use sport supplements outside of those provided by the NTC they are required to notify a member of their supplement panel prior to commencement. For those training outside the NTC they should complete the supplement register on the athlete management system as well as notifying their medical provider, sport scientist or dietitian as appropriate.

5. Supplement Panel

5.1. The RA Board shall endorse a Supplement Panel to oversee RA's Supplement Programme and the delivery of RA's Supplement Provision Protocol, including ongoing compliance with AIS Sports Science and Sports Medicine Best Practice Principles. This Panel will also be responsible for administration of RA's Supplement Protocol including the review, assessment and approval (or otherwise) of supplementation plans as proposed by appropriate Senior athletes within their performance plan, in accordance with clause 6.4

5.2. The Supplement Panel shall consist of:

- Principal Medical Officer (Chair)
- Performance Director
- Head of Pathways
- RA Senior Sports Dietitian
- Independent lay person
- RA Science Lead

5.3. In overseeing RA's Supplement Programme, the Supplement Panel shall:

- 5.3.1. Ensure that RA's policies and practices remain ethical, compliant with the WADA code and the AIS SSSM Best Practice Principles; and
- 5.3.2. Report at least annually to the Rowing Australia Board on the use of supplements.

5.4. The role of the Supplement Panel shall include:

- 5.4.1. Review of this Sports Foods, Medical and Performance Supplement Policy;
- 5.4.2. Annual review the operation of RA's Supplement Provision Protocol, including assessing and endorsing the summary of supplement practices by RA athletes;

- 5.4.3. Reviewing individual U23 and Senior A supplement requests for that season;
- 5.4.4. Discuss and review emerging trends in supplements with the aim of providing guidance and a researched position on their use within the Australian Rowing Team.
- 5.4.5. Engaging with other sports to collaborate on current trends within their sport with respect to supplements and ergogenic aids;
- 5.4.6. Assist with guiding rowing specific research with respect to supplements and ergogenic aids undertaken within the Australian Rowing High Performance network; and
- 5.4.7. Develop and distribute appropriate education materials to the rowing community.

6. RA Supplementation Provision Protocol

- 6.1. RA has developed a Supplementation Provision Protocol within which sports supplements are assessed. The Supplementation Provision Protocol provides guidance on the appropriate use of each category of sports supplements for athletes within the rowing community. The status of each group of supplements is guided by the AIS Sports Supplement Framework, at <https://www.sportaus.gov.au/ais/nutrition/supplements>.
- 6.2. The RA Supplementation Provision Protocol classifies supplements into groups according to their safety and effectiveness for each category of rower.
 - 6.2.1. Food and Sports Foods includes normal food items used to support training and recovery as well as those foods and drinks prepared with specific functionality for sport in mind. This may include sports drinks, sports gels, recovery drinks and protein-based drinks which are not essential for all athletes but at times offer a practical addition to regular food items. Sports foods which include performance supplements e.g. caffeine, creatine and others should be considered to be performance supplements.
 - 6.2.2. Medical Supplements includes items recommended by a medical practitioner or dietitian to correct identified deficiencies. Examples might include iron or calcium supplementation which have demonstrated benefit where there is a known deficiency.
 - 6.2.3. Performance Supplements includes supplements taken with the specific purpose of improving performance either in training or competition. Products selected in this category should have good evidence of benefit and safety when used in the right situations by the right athletes.
 - 6.2.4. Wherever possible supplements should be part of an independent batch testing program. Useful resources for this include SIA's clean fair sport app for iPhone and Android, as well as the HASTA and Informed Sport websites, <https://hasta.org.au>; and <https://www.informed-sport.com>.
 - 6.2.5. Service providers supplying supplements to NTC or SISAS programmes should ensure due diligence has been undertaken to find low risk supplements and that record keeping includes noting batch numbers of provided products. The supplement register in AMS is recommended as a method of recording products provided to individual athletes.

6.2.6. Any service provider, coach or athlete wishing to consider a new supplement, not covered by the existing supplement provision programme, must bring this to the attention of the Supplement Panel for assessment prior to use.

6.3. RA refers to the AIS Sport Supplement Framework and the ABCD categorisation of supplements on the basis of evidence, efficacy and safety as a guide when making decisions related to supplements. There may however be appropriate circumstances where RA, in accordance with this Policy, may wish to approve the administration of appropriate WAD Code permitted substances with supporting evidence that are included in Category B on the AIS Sport Supplement Framework to ensure that the individual needs of rowing are met. Where a supplement may be used for purely medical therapeutic purposes that do not fit within the AIS Sport Supplement framework these should be documented appropriately and notification provided to the supplement panel.

6.4. The RA Supplementation Provision Protocol is outlined below:

	Community	Junior & U21	U23	Senior
Food & Sports Foods focus (in line with those described in Category A of the AIS Sport Supplement Framework)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Medical Supplements (in line with those described in Category A of the AIS Sport Supplement Framework) under guidance from a health practitioner Such as Iron, Calcium Vitamin D	✓	✓	✓	✓
Performance Supplements (in line with those described in Category A of the AIS Sport Supplement Framework)	✗	✗	✗ Except: Creatine where approved by their support team.	✓ Athletes who are members of or preparing at the NTCs/SIS/SAS are eligible to include supplements from this category under the

Supplement Framework)			Caffeine when used in food or beverage form, which is permitted.	guidance of their coaching and support team. This includes U23 category athletes preparing to race at Senior competitions and those approved by the panel as outlined in section 6.5.3.
Such as Creatine Caffeine Bicarbonate Beta alanine Beetroot juice				

6.5. The process for consideration of suitability for administration of sport supplements to appropriate athletes shall be:

6.5.1. Each athlete seeking selection in an Australian Pathway or Senior Rowing Team must complete and submit a Medications and Supplement Questionnaire in accordance with directions provided by RA and this will be reviewed by the RA medical and nutrition team. Any performance supplements used as part of the trialling process should be declared through this questionnaire.

6.5.2. The Supplement Panel will review supplement questionnaires with respect to the provisions and guidelines within this policy. Where there is a discrepancy between the items declared and the guidelines in this policy either on the basis of efficacy, safety or suitability for stage of rowing career, the Panel will provide appropriate and relevant feedback.

6.5.3. Performance supplements would not generally be considered for U23 athletes. Identified crews with a good support structure including medical, nutrition and physiology support to allow for safe use and appropriate trialling may make a submission to the panel for performance supplement use. Approval is required and is at the discretion of the panel. US based U23 athletes who are routinely using Category A performance supplements in their home base will be allowed to continue providing they can demonstrate use of a suitable product and protocol for use.

7. Nicotine

7.1. While not classified by the AIS Supplement Framework, RA do not support the use of nicotine pouches as it poses significant health, performance and doping risks.

7.2. Nicotine is a controlled drug, regulated by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) in Australia.

7.3. Nicotine is an addictive stimulant found in tobacco products (cigarettes, cigars, chewing tobacco, tobacco pouches), tobacco-free products (some SNUS pouches), tobacco cessation products (gum, spray, patches) and e-cigarette (vape) liquids.

7.4. Nicotine use is increasing among athletes (especially in UK pro sport, plus the USA collegiate system), particularly in the form of nicotine pouches and SNUS.

- 7.5. Nicotine is currently on the WADA Monitoring Program List to assess both its use and misuse in sport.
- 7.6. Although nicotine is not prohibited in sport, there remains a doping risk due to lack of regulation.
- 7.7. Given the above, the RA does not support the use of nicotine in Rowing in any form or for any use by Rowers subject to this policy. The exception may be under the guidance of a medical practitioner to assist in smoking cessation.

8. Sanctions

- 8.1. Any athlete, coach, support staff or other person bound by this Policy that is found to have breached this Policy, or to have been administered with or taken any substance that was not approved under this Policy may face disciplinary action under the RA Member Protection Policy, Behaviour and Discipline Policy, National Team Nomination Terms & Conditions and/or other relevant Policies.
- 8.2. Such disciplinary action may involve a verbal or written warning, referral to the Integrity manager and, depending on the severity of the breach may result in additional sanctions including those available under the relevant policies.
- 8.3. Athletes and coaches that nominate for selection to Australian Rowing Teams are also bound by, amongst other RA Policies, the [Australian National Anti-Doping Policy](#) and must ensure that they comply with these policies at all times.
- 8.4. In addition to the sanctions which may be imposed by RA or SIA, it is important to understand that there are various laws concerning the importation or acquisition of certain substances and any breach of these laws may result in investigation and action by the relevant authorities under that legislation.