

Knowledge, Attitude and Practices on Nutrition and Supplement Use Among Sri Lankan University Athletes

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An unhealthy diet and the excessive use of supplements adversely affect the nutritional health and performance of athletes. This study aimed to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices on nutrition and supplement use among the Sri Lankan university athletes as there is scarcity of data locally. A descriptive cross-sectional online survey using convenient sampling was carried out among athletes from two state universities in Sri Lanka using a pretested questionnaire. The questionnaire contained 10 questions each on knowledge, attitude and practices. The total score for knowledge and practices was 10, with 5 serving as the cut-off in each category. A total score of 25 or higher was used as the cut-off for positive attitudes out of a possible total of 50. Males represented 51.8% of the 139 athletes between the ages of 21 and 28 years. Despite the fact that the majority (69%) of them had not undergone formal nutrition education, they had adequate knowledge of sports nutrition and among them, 92.8% had above-average knowledge. A majority of them (62.6%) received nutritional advice from their coaches. Among them, 59.7% had favorable dietary patterns, but 36.7% reported a lack of access to healthy food. A vast majority (99.3%) held positive opinions towards sports nutrition. They consumed vitamins/multivitamins (17.3%), calcium (17.3%), and iron (13.7%) most among the daily used supplements. Supplement use was a decision made independently by 19.4% of the athletes, while only 16.6% were guided by their coaches. The knowledge, attitudes and practices on sports nutrition are satisfactory among Sri Lankan university athletes though they have difficulties in getting a healthy diet. It is recommended to promote nutrition education further among the university athletes and their coaches and to provide adequate access to healthy foods.

Keywords: Healthy Food, University Athletes, Performance of Athletes