

How well do you know your supplement?

August 5 2016, by Robert Burgin



The majority of respondents were not using beta alanine in accordance with recommendations. Credit: University of Queensland

Only 35 per cent of Australian professional footballers were able to identify the benefits of a supplement they were taking, and 48 per cent admitted to never reading the labels.

University of Queensland School of Human Movement and Nutrition Sciences researcher Vince Kelly surveyed 570 athletes for his study about legal [supplement](#) beta alanine.

"The athletes surveyed consisted of 303 from the Australian Football League, 180 from the National Rugby League and 87 from Super

Rugby," Mr Kelly said.

"It's practically unheard of to gain participation by that many professional footballers in Australia.

"What we found was that only 11 per cent completed their own research on beta alanine and 48 per cent said they never read the labels prior to ingestion.

"The majority of respondents were not using beta alanine in accordance with recommendations," Mr Kelly said.

The study, conducted in 2010 and 2011 pre-dated sports doping allegations levelled at specific AFL and NRL clubs.

Beta alanine is purported to improve high intensity and intermittent exercise by preventing acidic accumulation and fatigue.

Significant proportions of the athletes wrongly associated the supplement with gains in cardiovascular endurance (20 per cent) and increased strength and muscle mass (16 per cent).

Many grossly underestimated the time required for beta alanine to take effect, with almost half of the NRL players surveyed believing it worked in less than 30 minutes, rather than two months.

"The reason why supplement companies love beta alanine is because it gives the consumer an instant physical sensation, one of pins and needles," Mr Kelly said.

"That reinforces the idea that it must work somehow.

"Often you'll hear athletes say things like 'Give me some. I need the

tingles' even though it takes a prolonged time to make changes at a cellular level."

In contrast to past studies on consumption of another popular supplement, creatine, where 75 per cent of consumers ingested too much, the UQ study showed less than 20 per cent of [athletes](#) were taking beta alanine frequently enough or in large enough quantities to comply with recommendations.

Mr Kelly said the study, published in the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, provided insights into group mentality and areas of opportunity for safer and more effective supplementation.

More information: Vincent G. Kelly et al. Prevalence, knowledge and attitudes relating to β -alanine use among professional footballers, *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* (2016). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jsams.2016.06.006](#)

Provided by University of Queensland

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