



# Dietary Habits and Use of Nutritional Supplements among Amateur Athletes in Southern Italy

Carlo Cusatelli<sup>1</sup>, Debora Cazzetta<sup>1</sup>, Filomena Corbo<sup>2</sup>, Andrea Troisi<sup>3</sup>  
 1. "Ionian Department, Bari University, Italy"; 2. "Department of Pharmacy-Drug Sciences, Bari University, Italy"; 3. "Dirium, Bari University, Italy".



## INTRODUCTION

Nutrition plays a fundamental role in supporting both health and performance in athletes. Study aim: the aim of this work is to describe in detail the eating habits and use of supplements in athletes from Puglia, using new data collected as part of a regional survey conducted in 2024. Theoretical background: cross-sectional analysis used in the study allowed to obtain a detailed and representative picture of the eating habits and use of supplements among Apulian athletes at a given time (year 2024). In particular, this methodology allowed to:

- describe the current situation;
- identify prevalent behaviors;
- evaluate the level of awareness;
- detect perceived needs for improvement.

Tab. 1 Foods commonly consumed before training by Apulian athletes.

Pre-workout food	% athletes (n=600)
Fresh fruit	24%
Yogurt	26%
Energy/protein bars	22%
Pasta or rice (complex carbohydrates)	11%
Nothing (trains on an empty stomach)	23%
Other (e.g. coffee, biscuits, supplements)	24%

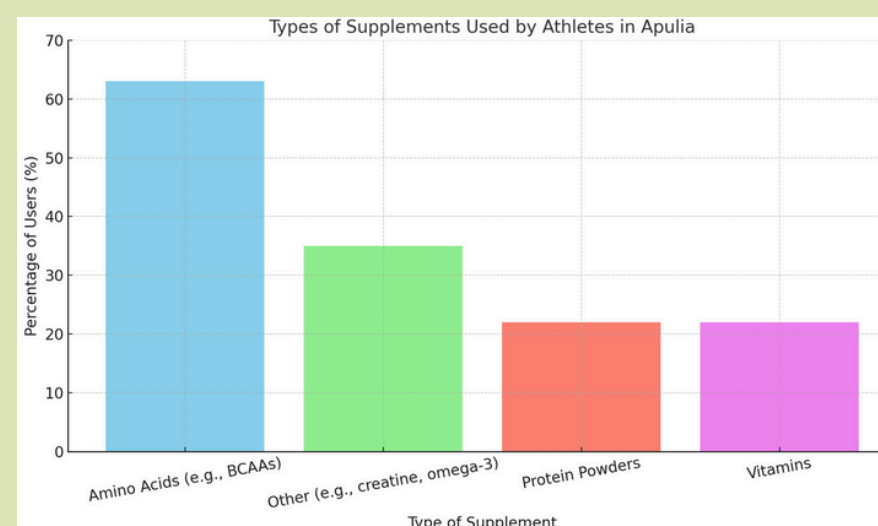
## METHODS

Cross sectional study on stratified random sampling (by gender and age group) was used to select participants in meal-frequency questionnaires interviewed via mixed-techniques (CAMI, CAWI, CAPI) . Sample: 600 apulian amateur athletes

Tab.2 Foods that athletes prefer to avoid in their diet

Foods avoided	% athletes (sample)
Fried foods	26%
Legumes	16%
Dairy products	10%
Vegetables	10%
Meat (especially red meat)	10%
Sweets	8%
Fish	7%
Fruit	5%
Alcohol	2%
Others (e.g. spicy foods, bread, etc.)	7%

Types of Supplements Used by Athletes in Apulia



## RESULTS

General awareness of healthy dietary practices; however, imbalances in macronutrient intake and insufficient dietary diversity were observed: in particular, a portion of the interviewees reported using supplements, often without professional guidance. Critical Behaviors Identified High incidence of:

- skipping breakfast (25%);
- working out on an empty stomach (23%);
- failure to recover after training (51%);
- poor use of professionals (only 1 in 5 uses experts).

## CONCLUSIONS

78% want to improve their eating habits. The most cited goals are: increasing protein (27%), eating more fruits and vegetables (10%), and reducing sugar (10%). Is the need for targeted educational initiatives aimed at promoting based nutritional choices and responsible use of supplements in the sports community.

