

# NHA/WASHINGTON

update\*

## Targeting Brain Supplements?

*FDA alert may discourage consumers from getting the brain nutrition they need.*

Last month, the Food and Drug Administration issued a warning about supplements designed to help people with concussions—and in doing so, gave the media impetus to write sensationalist headlines and articles attacking the nutrition industry's integrity. Media attacks on supplements are nothing new, but this one was different in that it seemed to target the popular practice of supporting the brain with nutrition.

It started with an FDA consumer alert, in which the organization cautioned that supplements cannot claim to treat or prevent concussions. According to the FDA, these supplements for the brain—often featuring omega-3 fatty acids and turmeric—may create a “false sense of recovery” that could compel people to return to strenuous activity or sports too soon after suffering a concussion. The FDA is correct in warning consumers against the extremely dangerous practice of returning to the field too soon when a concussion occurs.

Where the agency seems to get off-track, however, is in its vehement denial of brain supplements' ability to aid brain health in any capacity. Using language like “false claims” and “no scientific evidence,” the FDA seems to be discouraging consumers from including nutrition in programs designed to support the brain—nutrition that, in reality, may be helpful.

### Same Old Supplement Attacks

The FDA's consumer alert on brain supplements recalls past attacks on

health freedom. The FDA has an unfortunate history of blaming supplements for adverse events they did not cause. In this case, the agency seems to suggest that if an athlete chooses to defy doctor's orders and return to the field too soon after a concussion, then



somehow supplements are to blame.

The FDA also has a history of discrediting entire categories of nutrients because of one brand's labeling mistakes. In this case, the FDA has issued a serious, headline-dominating consumer alert based upon the labels of *two* supplement manufacturers out of *thousands* who label appropriately.

### What if Brain Nutrition Helps?

Just because one manufacturer may have mislabeled a supplement with overly aggressive claims doesn't mean the nutrients behind that supplement have no benefit. For example, omega-3 fatty acids like DHA, which are often deficient in the standard Western diet, play important roles in the structure of brain cells. DHA in particular has many

highly regarded benefits for supporting brain development and healthy cognitive function throughout life.

The FDA's cries of “false claims” and “no scientific evidence” seem to suggest, however, that nutrition has no place in post-concussion therapy. Meanwhile, accumulating scientific evidence has led some researchers to suggest that DHA may “act as a promising recovery aid” in cases of mild concussion.

Omega-3 fatty acids' potential to support concussion recovery is now being investigated in a clinical trial at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center—further suggesting these nutrients may hold significant brain health benefits.

And therein lies the tragedy of the FDA: With their extreme reaction to two brain supplement manufacturers' questionable labeling practices, this agency may be discouraging people from getting the safe, natural nutrition that just might help their brains stay healthy.

It is important to pay attention to FDA and media attacks on supplements, because in reality they may be attacks on health freedom. It may start with a single mislabeled supplement claiming to help with concussions. However, after dire FDA warnings and countless sensationalist headlines, it may end with consumers being denied access to the safe, natural brain nutrients they use to support memory, mood and mental clarity. Visit [www.nha2014.com](http://www.nha2014.com) for more details on how to join the fight to keep these health-enhancing nutritional supplements in our lives! ♦

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