

BRITISH TRIATHLETE TRIAL OF ELAGEN SPORT IN CONJUNCTION WITH TRIATHLETE MAGAZINE

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INTRODUCTION

Following an article in Triathlete Magazine (June 1995) about the dangers of over training and its often disastrous implications on the health and careers of athletes, and the successful use of Elagen Sport by a few top sportsmen with Post Viral Fatigue and over-training related problems, it was decided to conduct a small scale trial with a cross section of triathletes using Elagen Sport. No similar work had previously been carried out in the UK, and the response to a request for trial volunteers was so successful, particularly from many of the country's leading triathletes that it was evidently regarded as a serious issue amongst dedicated triathletes. A small number of athletes from other disciplines (including weightlifting, hurdling, swimming and cycling) were included as a subset within the trial. Interestingly they all gave the same reports of improved recovery and a number of new personal bests. Elagen Sport contains a natural 'Adaptogen', Eleutherococcus Senticosus, and the energy catalyst Co-enzyme Q10. Eleutherococcus has a strong reputation in Russia for its ability to improve the recovery processes and protect against viral infections, and has been well tried and tested by Russian athletes. Elagen Sport was scientifically formulated to help recovery, strengthen immunity and protect against the possibilities of over training. The Triathlete Trial was designed to verify the effects of using Eleutherococcus and Co-enzyme Q10 amongst athletes involved in one of the world's most challenging sports.

Elagen Sport contains standardised Eleutherococcus extract, this is very important because standardisation by specialised chromatography is the only way to ensure a consistent and effective dose of active ingredients in every capsule. Very few natural products are standardised and as such contain unknown quantities of activity. Elagen Sport is ideally suited for research purposes because it gives a consistent dose every time.

The aim of the trial was to establish the effects perceived by triathletes using Elagen Sport for the minimum period of three months. (Eleutherococcus takes up to three months to reach maximal effects) The trial was based on questionnaires designed to gain general feedback from the triathletes as to the effects they experienced after 1, 2 and 3 months continuous use of Eleutherococcus and included general questions about recovery, heart rate and overall comments.

The results of the trial were exceedingly positive and confirmed the use of Elagen Sport for speeding up recovery, preventing recurrent infections and helping to combat fatigue problems.

METHOD

23 triathletes were selected for the trial, they were of varying abilities and a number of them were chosen because they were suffering from fatigue problems and virus related illnesses. Of these 2 dropped out of the trial, one was unwell and did not take the capsules at all and the other was abroad and did not complete the full three months of the trial. Of the remaining 21 triathletes those selected include a number of the top British competitors (including Helen Cawthorne who is battling back from a severe episode of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome which struck her down last year), Marl Kleanhous the British record holder for the Double Ironman Triathlon, Eric Seedhouse who retained the World Endurance Triathlon Championship this year, Julian Jenkinson, Captain of the British Elite Team and other serious competitors at lower levels. The ages ranged from 16 to 53 years old and included 5 women volunteers.

A number of the volunteers chosen were selected because of their top ranking status which ensured that they were well versed in recognising and measuring their recovery and performance, and that they had regular and consistent training schedules. This not only helped to eliminate the bias of variable training loads and altered regimes but also ensured that those selected were the most reliable subjective observers of their own performance and would notice any changes during the trial.

The trial participants were asked to find their own optimal intake level of Elagen Sport during the trial and this varied between 2 to 10 capsules per day, although the majority used around 4 to 6 capsules per day depending on their training intensity and increased the dose during the days leading up to competitive events.

RESULTS

The results were extremely positive; only one male volunteer who had been suffering from recurrent viral infections did not notice any specific effects, which he could contribute towards Elagen Sport. However he did comment that he had won three competitions in his age group 'So I must be doing something right!' and wished to try it again when training patterns were better established. The remaining 21 volunteers noticed benefits particularly in their recovery and unanimously want to continue taking Elagen Sport.

Resting Heart Rate, which can be used to give an indication of fitness decreased by an average of 4 beats per minute with a mean range of decrease between 3 to 9 beats per minute in more than half the volunteers. No change was reported in the other half although subjective improvements in recovery were recorded.

There were no reports of adverse effects.

The general comments made by the triathletes reinforced repeatedly key areas in which Elagen Sport plays a major role in supporting and maintaining good health as outlined below.

- Better recovery, especially after strenuous training.
- Better recovery after racing.
- Hastened recovery from Post Viral Fatigue or over training problems.
- Less muscle fatigue and fewer after effects following sessions which would normally cause generalised muscular pains and necessitate rest.
- Reduction or cessation of problems such as colds, cold sores, swollen glands and fatigue problems in susceptible individuals.
- Faster recovery from illness than usually expected, and faster recovery than friends and family.
- Improved sense of health and well being.
- Improved performance.
- Less or no injuries.
- Lowered heart rate, resting and where measured reports given of faster recovery to resting level from maximum values.

WHAT TRIAL PARTICIPANTS THOUGHT AFTER 3 MONTHS OF ELAGEN SPORT

(Sample of comments)

Helen Cawthorne, 34 years old

Dose: 4-6 capsules per day

Details: member of the British Elite Squad and recovering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome.

Heart rate decrease: from 37 to 32 beats/min.

After 3 months – "Throughout this period (initial slow start in training after severe Chronic Fatigue Syndrome) I have taken Elagen Sport and believe it has aided my recovery significantly. I did have a two week break from taking Elagen Sport in November (ran out of capsules) and experienced notable effects – more tired, irritable, and lethargic. My morning heart rate is around 32 most days and only increased significantly when I had a bad cold/sore throat in late December – many people had the same illness but took 2 weeks to recover, I felt fine in 3 days."

After 6 months – "Better recovery after hard training, less muscle fatigue, resting heart rate lower and generally stable. Feel more able to do a hard session the next day. No cold this winter and one cold sore – I usually get loads!"

Andrew East, 40 years old

Dose: 2-6 capsules per day

Details: Former Great Britain Team member (Nice World Championships) competes in Ironmans.

After a month: Took 2 capsules a day, no difference recorded.

After 2 months: Increased dose to 4 capsules per day. Found that he could train the next day, not feeling constantly tired as before.

After 3 months: Increased dose further to 6 capsules per day. Found that he could sleep and rest. Rate of recovery was good and did not suffer any injuries.

Overall comments – “The only indicator I can give is that I am able to train the next day without feeling washed out or tired”

Mark Kleanhous, 34 years old

Dose: 2-4 capsules per day

Details: British record holder Double Ironman Triathlon. Since finishing Triple Ironman in France has had a lot of difficulty training hard and regularly without taking lots of rest before resuming training.

Heart rate decrease: from 49-50 to 44-47 beats/min

After 3 months: “Almost back to normal fitness again. Able to swim, cycle and run more often. Recovery after lactate threshold sessions much better”

After 4 months: “Able to compete as before and in some instances improved positions and-or times in races that I have competed in for many years.”

Overall comment: “having competed for the last 15 years I have found Elagen Sport to actually work.”

Alan Powell, 53 years old

Dose: 2-4 capsules per day

Details: Always in top 3 of age group since starting triathlons in 1984 with many other successes.

Member of the Great Britain team.

Heart rate decrease: unchanged at 48 beat/min

Overall comments: “ Regrettably I am not able to give heart rate recovery but it was particularly noticeable after a hard session of sever disciplines – the next day I was much more able than previous to take on extra work. This was particularly noticeable after the Nice race (won bronze medal in 50-54 age group) – the nest day which should have been ‘hell’ was quite the contrary and I spent an active day with the family. Perhaps when working in the pool on threshold or overload sets I was recovering back from 165/170 to 120 beats per minute about 5 seconds quicker than prior to my intensive regime. I believe that Elagen sport has assisted my sporting performance. This was confirmed during December when I did not take the capsules for a whole month and towards the end of that period I was beginning to feel lethargic, and this was very much reflected in my training.”

DISCUSSION

Recovery and protection are key words for all athletes. Recovery from training, recovery from illness and recovery from injury, and through fast efficient recovery from an athlete derives maximum benefit from training and does not enter the danger-zone of over-training. Even the most talented of athletes need to allow their bodies sufficient recovery during and between training sessions and competition in order to be successful and achieve maximum potential.

Over-training leads to breakdown of the body’s defence mechanisms and leads to fatigue, inability to teach previous potentials and susceptibility to illness and injury, ultimately resulting in chronic fatigue states. Well-known athletes such as Sebastian Coe and Carl Lewis have been struck down by illness at the peak of their careers, as are a large percentage of athletes at all major events who have to withdraw from competition.

Results from the triathlete trial indicate that Elagen Sport aids recovery in all areas and is effective for athletes of varying ability and all ages. It is also particularly useful for athletes already suffering from health problems and fatigue states (although athletes with severe fatigue, experienced over the past four years indicates that an initial loading course with high dose Eleutherococcus alone –Elagen High Potency capsules – is advantageous before starting with purely Elagen Sport.)

The number of capsules required varies from one individual to the next and there is a threshold above which no further benefits can be experienced. Some individuals find 2 capsules daily during training to be sufficient although often more are needed. Most trial participants took 4 to 6 capsules daily with an increase uptake to a further 2 capsules per day prior to competition.

No harmful effects were experienced, as would be expected as Eleutherococcus is notoriously safe to take and is in fact the only herbal supplement which Russian cosmonauts are permitted to take because of its safety record and obviously, its effectiveness.

SCIENTIFIC BACKGROUND TO ELAGEN SPORT AND ELEUTHEROCOCCUS

Elagen Sport contains Eleutherococcus Senticosus (“The Russian Power Plant (1)”) and Co-enzyme Q10. Eleutherococcus is a thorny shrub originating from Eastern Siberia; the extract from the root has been extensively researched in Russia and is classed as an adaptogen (2). This is a substance which acts to restore any imbalances in the body’s normal biochemical or physiological processes towards normal. It has been shown to be particularly effective in times of stress such as during intense physical activity. Research shows that using Eleutherococcus increases the numbers and activation of the white blood cells (notably T Helper Lymphocytes) which are responsible for fighting viral infections (3). Large-scale studies over periods of up to 7 years show that Eleutherococcus reduced the incidence of common viruses including colds and flu by up to 90% in factory workers in the Volga Automobile Plant (4). The Russians found Eleutherococcus so effective at improving the recovery processes during physical activity and preventing illness that as long ago as 1962 a Government Directive recommended the use of the extract to all Russian athletes including the National Olympic Teams and it is used to this day (5).

Co-enzyme Q10 is a natural energy catalyst found in all human cells and normally derived from the diet. During times of increased energy expenditure the demand for Co-enzyme Q10 increases and dietary supplementation is recommended. The Co-enzyme also acts as an antioxidant protecting cells from damage by free radicals found in certain fats, pollution, pesticides and sunlight.

Many trials, in fact over 1000, have been conducted using Eleutherococcus, but most of these are Russian and many of them, especially the work with athletes remain secretive and impossible to access. Work in Germany largely concentrates on the immune system protecting and strengthening properties of Eleutherococcus. Both Eleutherococcus and Co-enzyme Q10 are classed as food substances and are not on any list of banned substances.

CONCLUSIONS

The Triathlete Trial provided very encouraging and strongly positive feedback from the majority of triathletes involved. It demonstrated a clear improvement in recovery and protection against viral illnesses, and help in recovery from fatigue problems. Despite the relatively small number of participants, many of these were amongst the top triathletes in the country and they gave reliable and convincing accounts of their experiences. The results were so strongly favourable that it can only be concluded that the improvements noted in recovery were attributable to Elagen Sport and not to any other influences. The results are also consistent with previous results of work done in Russia as outlined above. To quote Eric Seedhouse ‘Elagen Sport is the ultimate insurance policy and should be used by all athletes.’

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