

What can happen to me if my test result is positive because I used medication without knowing that it contained a prohibited substance?



Under the overarching principle of strict liability in effect under anti-doping regulations, you as an athlete are ultimately responsible for everything that goes into your body, whether it was recommended, prescribed, or even provided by someone else. If an athlete tests positive, the result is a disqualification, and possible sanction or suspension.



Should I worry about creams, eye drops and other medications which I do not need to swallow?

You certainly should. Prohibited substances come in different forms and shapes and they may enter your body in different ways: by contact with your skin (creams and ointments), by inhalation (if you breathe in their vapor or mist), by contact with a mucus membrane (eye or ear drops, suppository, etc.).

Any medication applied to your body will likely enter your system to act in the way that is intended (reduce inflammation, relieve pain, kill bacteria, etc), and will be present in your blood before eventually being eliminated by the kidneys and turn up in your urine.



What if an emergency arises for which I do not have the time or ability to verify that the medication required is free of banned substances?

In exceptional circumstances, when an acute life-threatening medical condition requires immediate intervention involving the use of a medication containing a prohibited substance, you and your physician must apply for a therapeutic use exemption immediately after the treatment has been delivered. However, it is expected that such cases will occur very rarely and therapeutic use exemptions will therefore be granted in emergency situations under close scrutiny.



Is there a list of medications which do not contain prohibited substances?

To maintain current information with respect to prohibited substances on all products manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry around the world would require tremendous resources which are not at WADA's disposal at the moment.

Several tools and publications exist for that purpose. Doctors and pharmacists in some countries have access to an index of pharmaceutical products clearly stating which medications are allowed or not in sports, updated every month or year.

Some national anti-doping agencies also offer this type of advice, either in the form of a list of permitted medications for common ailments, a substance inquiry hotline or email service, or a consultable database of medications and substances. Please refer to the WADA website at www.wada-ama.org to find the coordinates of your national anti-doping agency. If your country does not have a national anti-doping agency listed on WADA's website, please consult your national sport federation, National Olympic Committee or a competent health professional in your country to find out what other resources are available.

For any enquiry, please contact **Anti-Doping Singapore (ADS)**

Telephone: (65) 63457111
Fax: (65) 64409205
Email: tue@antidoping.org.sg
Website: www.antidoping.org.sg

Athletes and Medications Q&As



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What can I do to avoid a positive test from taking a medication?

There are two ways for you to obtain medication: either by prescription from your doctor or directly from the shelves of a drugstore or pharmacy. Every time a prescription needs to be written for you, you must remind your doctor that you are an athlete and are subject to anti-doping regulations. Your doctor should ensure that the medication prescribed does not contain any banned substances. If your doctor is unable to determine this, then the decision should be taken in consultation with your national anti-doping agency or with a competent pharmacist.

If you need to take a medication that does not require a prescription (commonly referred to as "over-the-counter"), it is highly recommended that you consult your national anti-doping agency or that you show the Prohibited List to the pharmacist and ask for help before you decide on a product. Also, when choosing the right medication, make sure that you take exactly the one that was recommended. Some brand names offer multiple variations of the same product (non-drowsy, fast-relief, extra-strength, longer-lasting, etc.) and with the formula being different for each, there is a real risk that one will contain a prohibited substance while another may not.

The current Prohibited List is always posted on the World Anti-Doping Agency's website at www.wada-ama.org. Generally, an updated version of the List is published every year in October and becomes effective January 1st of the following year.



What if the only medication to treat my medical condition contains a prohibited substance?

The World Anti-Doping Code recognizes the right of athletes to the best possible treatment for any medical condition. If you are in need of medication, please contact your international federation or your national anti-doping agency to find out more about the criteria and procedures to apply for a therapeutic use exemption (TUE). More information on the TUE process can be found on the ADS website at www.antidoping.org.sg. Before applying for a TUE, it is recommended that you consult your doctor to consider possible alternative treatments which do not involve the use of a prohibited substance or method. If such an alternative treatment exists, your TUE request will likely be denied and the whole process can only delay your recovery.

If I get sick and my next competition is scheduled in two weeks from now, how long can it take for medications to be eliminated from my body?



The amount of time someone's body takes to get rid of all traces of a substance depends on the nature of the substance and quantity taken, the individual's metabolism, the administration method, and on a number of other factors such as quantity of liquids consumed, interaction with other ingredients in the same medication, or other substances ingested. In essence, there is no general rule and the delay can vary from a few hours to several months. More importantly, since you are also subject to out-of-competition testing, the fact that you will not compete in the next two weeks does not preclude the possibility of being tested before then.

What should I do if I get sick while traveling in a foreign country?



Medications are usually commercialized under different names in different countries, and even if they have the same brand names, they may also have different composition in order to respect each country's laws on availability of certain substances. In one country, one product may be safe to take from an anti-doping perspective, while in another country the product sold under the same name may contain a prohibited substance.

Before using medications purchased in a foreign country, it is best to consult your team doctor, try to contact the national anti-doping agency in the country that you are visiting, or contact your own national anti-doping agency to ask for advice on what to do. As a last resort, you can bring the Prohibited List to a pharmacy and consult the list of ingredients with the pharmacist on duty to ensure that the product you intend to take does not contain prohibited substances.

One way to prevent such situation to occur is to bring with you, as part of your "travel kit", small doses of medications from home which you know are safe to use and that you anticipate may be required during your stay abroad (pain and fever, allergy, common cold, stomach aches, skin infections, etc.)

Before bringing any medication into a foreign country or bringing one back home from abroad, it is wise to check whether customs regulations would allow you to do so and ensure that you do not carry into your country of destination a substance that is illegal there.

What else is being done to help athletes avoid an inadvertent positive result from using the wrong medication?



WADA is looking at possible partnerships with pharmaceutical associations publishing indexes of pharmaceutical products so that physicians prescribing treatment have immediate reference in the index about a medication containing or not a substance prohibited under anti-doping regulations.

WADA is also investigating the possibility of a global drug reference database which would contain all pharmaceutical products sold throughout the world and their status against the Prohibited List. Such database would enable athletes to have access to reliable information about the ingredients of any pharmaceutical product, no matter in what parts of the world they require to purchase it.

What about homeopathic products and alternative medicine?



As is the case for nutritional supplements, in some countries homeopathic products, herbal remedies and other alternative medicinal products are not subjected to the same quality control requirements as pharmaceutical products. Therefore improper labeling, poor manufacturing practices and contamination can cause prohibited substances to be present without the consumer knowing. Homeopathic products are usually very low in concentration of active substances, however since the label usually does not specify ingredients by chemical substances but rather by origin (name of plant or animal it is extracted from), it is difficult for anyone to determine whether a prohibited substance may be present.

In addition, athletes have to be careful about any home remedies that have found their place in the family tradition or cultural lifestyle. Many such concoctions are derived from herbal products and some prohibited substances do originate from plants. Remember, under the strict liability principle, it does not matter how or why a prohibited substance entered an athlete's body. Athletes are responsible for everything that goes into their body.