

## Drugs in sport

The use of drugs to enhance sporting performance is termed 'doping'. Athletes who may be tested by a doping control agency should ensure all medicines they take, prescription-only and over-the-counter, do not contain substances included in the World Anti-Doping Code list of prohibited substances (prohibited list).<sup>1</sup> The World Anti-Doping Authority has been responsible for preparing the list since 2004.

Athletes should take only medicines prescribed by a practitioner familiar with the list of prohibited medicines for the individual athlete's sport. To avoid inadvertent doping, athletes should be made aware that many nutritional supplements contain banned substances. Extreme caution should be used when considering the use of supplements of unknown quality or origin.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Prohibited substances

A substance is included in the list of prohibited substances if it satisfies any two of the following criteria<sup>4,5</sup>:

- potential to enhance sport performance
- actual or potential risk to health
- violation of the spirit of sport.

The use of listed substances and practices are prohibited<sup>1</sup>:

- at all times—i.e. both during competition and out of competition (e.g. anabolic agents, hormones, beta<sub>2</sub> agonists, substances with anti-estrogenic activity and diuretics and other masking agents)
- during competition—those prohibited at all times in addition to listed stimulants, narcotics, cannabinoids and glucocorticosteroids
- in particular sports—e.g. archery and motor sports (alcohol); and shooting and billiards (beta-blockers).

The prohibited list also identifies specific substances and doping practices which are particularly susceptible to unintentional anti-doping rule violations because of their general availability in medicinal products.

Links to the current prohibited list can be found on the Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA) website ([www.asada.gov.au](http://www.asada.gov.au)). ASADA, an Australian government authority, deters athletes and sports officials from engaging in doping practices through education, drug and doping testing, advocacy, investigation and coordination of Australia's anti-doping program. It also has powers to investigate suspected cases of doping.

It is recommended that reference is always made to the current prohibited list, the ASADA *Anti-doping Handbook*<sup>6</sup>, and/or the relevant national sporting organisation for sport-specific variations and newly listed substances or changes to the World Anti-Doping Code.

Further anti-doping information or confirmation of permitted use may be obtained by phoning the ASADA Anti-doping Hotline on 1800 020 506 (8 am – 8 pm, Australian Eastern Standard Time, seven days a week).

### Therapeutic use exemption<sup>6</sup>

The use of some medications is permitted under specified conditions. The Australian Sports Drug Medical Advisory Committee (ASDMAC) is the body which grants such exemptions. If an athlete requires treatment with prohibited substances an athlete can apply to ASDMAC for a therapeutic use exemption form by mail or at [www.asdmac.org.au](http://www.asdmac.org.au).

For example, athletes using the beta agonists eformoterol, salbutamol, salmeterol or terbutaline must have a medical practitioner sign an exemption form specifying the substance, dosage, and duration of treatment and the diagnosis of asthma or exercise-induced bronchospasm.

Authorities should also be notified where glucocorticoids are:

- inhaled (for the treatment of asthma and/or allergic rhinitis)
- injected into joints, bursae or lesions but not intravenously or by intramuscular injection
- applied topically to the ear, the eye or the skin.

The athlete's state and national sporting organisation must be notified well in advance of any competition, and the onus is on the athlete to ensure that documentation is appropriate and timely.

Where a prohibited substance has been used appropriately during a medical emergency such as a hospital admission, a provisional therapeutic use exemption may be granted after the event. An application should be made as quickly as possible.