



Doping...

You may have heard this word used in sporting circles and in the media. While some of what you know about doping might be true, it is important to know the facts.



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What is doping?

'Doping' refers to an athlete's use of prohibited drugs or methods to improve training and sporting results. Steroids are the drugs that often come to mind when we talk about doping, but doping also includes an athlete's use of other forbidden drugs (such as stimulants, hormones, diuretics, narcotics and marijuana), use of forbidden methods (such as blood transfusions or gene doping), and even the refusal to take a drug test or an attempt to tamper with doping controls.

As you continue to participate in sport, doping is an issue that you will increasingly face: you could be tested for drugs; some of your competitors will be cheating by using drugs; you may even be tempted to do so yourself.

Why do people cheat?

Most athletes know that doping is cheating, however, some still take the risk.

Sometimes prizes, money or fame can cause people to make bad decisions. They are told that doping might give them a boost, provide a shortcut to long years of training or help them win. And they are prepared to risk their sporting careers and their health - they are prepared to win at all cost!

Others feel pressure from coaches, parents or themselves to be the best. They see doping as a way to meet these expectations.

Some athletes use drugs to overcome an injury. Trainers or coaches might say that drugs can make you forget about the pain or may help speed up recovery, but they often do not mention the health risks and that doping is cheating.

Whatever the reason, there is no excuse for doping.



What is the big deal?

It is true that doping can help athletes to build strength and muscle, reduce tiredness or cover pain, but it has bad side effects too.

Some drugs can lead to obvious changes in appearance. For example, steroid use can cause acne, particularly on the back. In boys it can shrink testicles, cause impotence and baldness, and girls can develop a deeper voice and facial hair. There can be even more serious side effects. Doping can cause heart, liver and kidney problems and has even killed some athletes.

Doping in sport is also cheating. It destroys fair play and sporting competition. There is much more to sport than just winning and, for sport to survive as a positive, worthwhile activity, honesty, cooperation and courage are essential.

What drugs are banned?

There are many types of drugs that are banned in sport because of the damage they can do to an athlete's health and to fair play. Every year a new list of banned drugs is prepared by the World Anti-Doping Agency. These drugs fall within the following categories:

- *stimulants* may increase concentration and reduce tiredness, but they can also damage the heart;
- *steroids* can increase muscle and strength, but they harm the heart, liver and reproductive system and can cause sudden death;
- *hormones* can have a variety of useful medical purposes, but they can be harmful when you are young and still growing;
- *diuretics* may help with weight loss but they cover up the use of other banned drugs and can cause dehydration and fatigue;
- *narcotics* can relieve pain but this could lead to a lasting injury;
- *cannabinoids (hashish, marijuana)* can act as relaxants, but may also lead to a loss of coordination and concentration.

Even if you take something by accident it is still considered doping. Ultimately, *you* are responsible for everything that goes into your body.

Be sure to avoid any drugs that are not prescribed by a medical doctor who knows that you are an athlete. Some drugs or supplements from the pharmacy or supermarket can contain banned substances even if their labels state that the product is 'all natural'.

Tell your doctor that you are an athlete and that you have to be careful about the medicines you take. If you need medicine for a health problem, there are ways to ensure that the medicine you take does not impact on your ability to play sport. For example, if you need asthma medicine, your sport organization and doctor can give you a form to allow you to use this medicine and to play sport. This is called a TUE (Therapeutic Use Exemption).

Look after yourself

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Play fair

To be successful in sport, you need the right attitude. Honesty, dignity, fair play, respect, teamwork, commitment and courage are essential to a memorable sporting performance. All these values can be summed up in the term 'fair play'.

Fair play has to do with the choices you make - what is right and wrong. People will notice how you play the game. You will get a reputation for being a good or a bad sport which will follow you around long after the competition is over. It can shape how people act towards you before they even get to know you. To conform with the spirit of sport and build a good reputation, always:

- show respect for yourself and for others (competitors, umpires/referees and officials);
- respect the rules of the competition and of clean sport;
- be gracious as much in victory as in defeat;
- have fun and enjoy being part of the action!

Sport has little meaning without fair play. We play sport because of the chance to show our unique talents, to share, to make friends and to have fun. Fair play makes all this possible.

Doping control

As you get older and get better at sport it is likely that you will be tested for doping. These tests are aimed at preserving the spirit of sport by catching the cheats.

Testing can take place during a competition, during training, or in the off-season and will generally be given without forewarning. If you refuse to take a test or to follow the testing procedures, you will receive the same sanction as an athlete who tests positive.

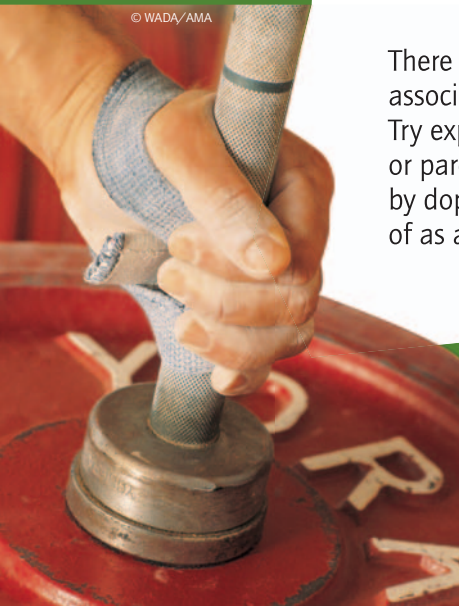
These tests are done by a certified Doping Control Officer who collects a urine sample. In some cases, both a blood sample and urine sample is required. Samples are sent to an approved lab for analysis. Some drugs can be detected in very small amounts and months after they have been taken. Evidence of the use of some other drugs can be found as a result of the changes they cause inside the body.

Getting caught

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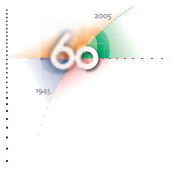
Athletes caught cheating by doping will be banned from sport. Imagine not being able to play any sport for a two-year period or for the rest of your life. After all your training, the closest you would get to sport would be from the sidelines or the stands.

There is also a great deal of shame associated with being caught doping. Try explaining to your friends, teammates or parents that you have been cheating by doping. Nobody wants to be thought of as a drug cheat.



Key things to think about

- Sport is about expressing your true self and realizing your own unique potential.
- Being successful at sport takes the right attitude, practice, time and effort.
- Giving your natural best is always good enough.
- You will be judged on *how* you play, not just the result.
- You, and only you, are responsible for what goes into your body.



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