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WORLD ANTI-DOPING AGENCY RELEASES COVID-19 ATHLETE Q&A

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The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has responded to athlete queries concerning anti-doping in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic by publishing a Question and Answer (Q&A) article that it developed in consultation with its Athlete Committee. This article is reproduced by UIPM with permission from WADA.

Can I still be tested during the COVID-19 pandemic given the many restrictions in place, especially as it relates to social distancing and self-isolation?

Yes. Where no mobility or physical contact restrictions have been put in place by local authorities, testing may still occur anytime and anywhere.

If I am tested, what will be done to minimize the chances of infection?

If a testing program can continue, ADOs need to put enhanced measures in place, consistent with the recommendations from health care authorities, to protect your health and that of sample collection personnel. More information can be found in WADA's ADO Guidance of 20 March 2020.

What specific measures will ADOs take to minimize the chances of transmission?

Firstly, ADOs have been advised to conduct only the most critical doping controls. When conducting these tests, sample collection personnel must wash their hands regularly, and sanitize their hands or put on new gloves upon arriving at the testing location. Athletes and sample collection personnel must also, as far as possible, maintain the recommended social distance (two meters).

What should I do if I have symptoms that indicate I may have COVID-19?

You should prioritize your health and the health of those around you. If you are concerned that you may have contracted the virus, the priority is to self-isolate and follow other precautions (hand washing, etc.) as recommended by international health organizations. You should also contact your local health authorities to ensure that you are following proper procedures in your region. In an antidoping context, you should advise your ADO of your situation with your whereabouts submission or when doping control personnel notify you for testing so that they can adjust their plans accordingly.

Do I still need a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) if I have a medical condition requiring a prohibited substance or method?

As long as you remain subject to testing, you remain responsible for ensuring you have a valid TUE. If you have difficulty accessing a physician during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to access the necessary documentation to support your TUE application, you should document all actions and impediments to comply with the relevant requirements, and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

If athletes are not being tested regularly or less than usual, what is WADA doing to ensure clean competition when the situation returns to normal?

WADA is closely monitoring where levels of testing have been reduced or cancelled altogether. When the sporting landscape returns to normal, these 'gaps' in testing may be addressed through additional targeted testing.

Do I still need to provide my whereabouts information?

Unless your ADO tells you otherwise, you should continue to provide whereabouts information as you remain subject to testing. If you wish to share information about your health, self-isolation,

mobility restrictions, etc. which may impact doping controls, please share this information with your whereabouts submission.

Can I refuse to be tested if I am self-isolating, in quarantine, or do not feel that adequate precautions are being taken by sample collection personnel?

No. Unless there is a mandatory isolation/lockdown, you are advised to comply with testing while following the preventative measures put in place by your ADO. If you refuse to be tested or if you do not complete the sample collection process after notification, or if you are not able (or willing) to provide a sample due to a lack of protective measures, your refusal will follow the normal results management process which affords you due process and the opportunity to justify your action. Keeping in mind that little testing is taking place, where appropriate, athletes are encouraged to comply with testing. If you rely on the assistance of a representative to assist with the doping control process (especially for minors or athletes with an impairment), and a representative is unavailable due to the impact of COVID-19, this too should be taken into account in the results management process.

With reduction in testing, how can I have confidence in the future that I will be competing in a doping-free environment?

Placing public health above the needs of the anti-doping system means that there will be impacts on the fight against doping in sport. However, there is significantly less training being carried out and significantly fewer competitions taking place. It is also important for athletes to remember that doping control samples continue to be stored for future analysis and that with the Athlete Biological Passport, some samples collected post-COVID-19 may reveal indications of doping that occurred during the period. Finally, while testing may be reduced worldwide during this period, you can contribute to anti-doping efforts by ensuring you are up to date on the latest information and education and encourage your peers and team-mates to do the same. You can familiarize yourself with WADA's anti-doping education resources by visiting the Agency's anti-doping education elearning platform, ADeL, at <https://adel.wada-ama.org/>