

COVID-19: ADO GUIDANCE

20 March 2020

MESSAGE TO ANTI-DOPING ORGANIZATIONS (ADOs)

Since the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) last communicated to ADOs on the matter of testing on [6 March](#), the SARS-Cov-2 (COVID-19) pandemic has continued to evolve into an even greater health and societal emergency that requires effective action by everyone around the world to minimize the likelihood of transmission and the impact on society.

WADA is monitoring the situation based on expert information from the [World Health Organization](#) and from other reliable sources. Most countries are putting strict measures in place, which include border closures, quarantine/self-isolation, cancellation of flights, social movement restrictions, etc. As a result, many sporting events have been cancelled or postponed. This has forced WADA and its stakeholders to adjust daily operations by instituting teleworking; and, in the case of many ADOs, suspending or reducing doping control programs (including testing and other activities).

Throughout, the Agency has been urging all ADOs to follow the advice of government and health authorities to ensure proper protection of athletes and doping control personnel, while protecting the integrity of doping control programs, particularly in the lead-up to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

This remains the aim, and WADA's vision of a world where all athletes can compete in a doping-free sporting environment remains the same. However, we all agree that the protection of public health must take precedence; and so, we must put stronger measures in place as a global anti-doping community.

In keeping with governmental measures that have been, and are being, put in place around the world, WADA has evaluated the global anti-doping program in collaboration with ADOs, including National Anti-Doping Organizations (NADOs), International Federations (IFs), Major Event Organizations (MEOs); and, other organizations such as the International Testing Agency (ITA)) — which is leading the pre-Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games Task Force on behalf of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) — as well as laboratories to determine how we, as a community, can best operate in this challenging environment.

We are grateful to ADOs that have outlined how they are being impacted and what measures they are putting in place. Given the differences specific to each country, it is difficult to establish one overarching set of recommendations or guidelines. However, based on information and experience to date, WADA is recommending that ADOs consider the following 'Guidance' regarding key elements of the World Anti-Doping Program.

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It is important to remember that, first and foremost, ADOs should follow the recommendations (or requirements) of their national government and health authorities related to all activities. If this information is not available, then ADOs may want to approach their government authorities to seek their guidance. While ADOs may be adjusting their operations given COVID-19, athletes continue to remain subject to all provisions of the World Anti-Doping Code and must comply accordingly.

Our overarching priority remains the same — to ensure the health and safety of athletes and all those that are touched by our community’s operations. In order to do this and protect the integrity of the global anti-doping system, we must endeavor to take a coherent approach across the system, which demonstrates solidarity among the community; and, aims to give athletes confidence that they remain at the core of our mission.

Accordingly, WADA encourages open and continuous dialogue amongst all its stakeholders so that we can continue to monitor and adjust. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your respective WADA contact in Montreal or in one of the Agency’s regional offices. The Agency commits to support and communicate as required as we in the Clean Sport community navigate these difficult times together.

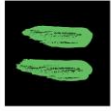
Best regards and stay healthy,

World Anti-Doping Agency

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1. Testing

- a. If their testing program can continue, ADOs need to put enhanced measures in place, consistent with the recommendations from health care authorities, to protect the health and safety of the sample collection personnel, the athletes and anyone else involved in the process. This may include the following:
 - i. Develop specific operational guidelines and procedures, and conduct specific training, for sample collection personnel.
 - ii. Ensure sample collection personnel who are conducting missions are healthy and do not have any symptoms that may be related to COVID-19, including sore throat,



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- cough, fever, however mild. In principle, sample collection personnel should not be involved in a testing mission if they are ill, regardless if it is related to COVID-19.
- iii. Instruct sample collection personnel to ask athletes, upon initial communication at the start of a sample collection session, if they, or anyone at the testing location is sick, experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms or are in the 'at risk' demographic (i.e. the elderly).
 - iv. Provide medical masks (if available) and gloves, hand sanitizer, alcohol wipes, etc., along with instructions on how to properly use and dispose of the materials, to sample collection personnel. ADOs should also make these materials available to athletes and their representatives upon request.
 - v. Instruct sample collection personnel to wash their hands regularly, and to sanitize their hands or put on new gloves upon arriving at the testing location.
 - vi. Emphasize the need, as much and as practical as possible, to maintain the recommended social distance (two meters) between the sample collection personnel and the athlete during the sample collection session while ensuring the integrity of the process is maintained.
 - vii. Disinfect work surfaces and all materials prior to starting the sample collection process, in between athletes being tested, and at the end of sample collection. Sample collection personnel should change gloves in between athletes if they are testing more than one athlete during a sample collection session.
 - viii. Require athletes to wash their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer prior to the start of the sample collection session. When ready to provide a sample, the athlete shall rinse their hands with water only and then provide a sample as per the requirements of the [International Standard for Testing and Investigations \(ISTI\)](#). After providing the sample and closing the collection vessel, the athlete shall wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water or hand sanitizer and proceed with the sealing of the sample.
- b. If testing can continue, but the situation in the country is not fully stable, then ADOs should consider focusing their testing program on targeted athletes from high risk sports and disciplines, including those in their Registered Testing Pool (RTP), and prioritizing urgent missions.
 - c. ADOs should consider issuing specific COVID-19 authorization letters to their sample collection personnel that would assist in confirming the requirement of the athlete to undergo the test, outlining the measures that the ADO has taken health wise to protect the athlete and the potential consequences to the athlete should they refuse.

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- d. If the testing program cannot continue, the ADOs should adjust their programs accordingly and continually monitor the situation. Once the situation begins to return to normal, all stakeholders (in particular NADOs, IFs, MEOs and WADA) can work together to address the identified gaps, in particular as it relates to the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games (currently still scheduled for July-September 2020).
- e. In case any sample collection personnel contracts COVID-19, athletes who have been tested by the sample collection personnel within the last three weeks should be informed. Conversely, athletes who are tested and subsequently contract COVID-19 should be encouraged to inform the ADO who is responsible for the sample collection personnel who collected the sample so that the sample collection personnel and the laboratory (through the provision of the sample number only) can be contacted and advised.

2. Whereabouts

- a. ADOs should continue to collect whereabouts from athletes in whereabouts pools to monitor their movements during the pandemic as it can be useful information and intelligence, including if the athlete is travelling or training abroad (then the athlete could potentially be tested abroad by either a NADO or their IF).
- b. ADOs should take this opportunity to review the submission of whereabouts information being provided by athletes in their whereabouts pools to ensure it is accurate and covers the mandatory requirements of the ISTI.
- c. Athletes should be encouraged to inform their relevant ADOs, directly and/or through the Anti-Doping Administration & Management System (ADAMS), if they are sick and/or if they are in self-quarantine (and why). Additional documentation/proof may be required by the ADO.

3. Education

- a. The same risk assessment and considerations being undertaken for testing should also apply for education.
- b. On-line and virtual education should be considered where possible (and where needed). WADA's [Anti-Doping e-Learning platform \(ADeL\)](#) offers access to all topics related to anti-doping for athletes, coaches, doctors, administrators and anyone else interested in learning more about anti-doping and protecting the values of clean sport.

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4. Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs)

- a. As long as athletes remain subject to testing, they remain responsible for ensuring they have a valid TUE where applicable.
- b. If an athlete has difficulty accessing a physician during the pandemic in order to provide the necessary documentation to support their TUE application, the athlete should document all actions and impediments to complying with the relevant requirements, and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis. There is the ability to request a retroactive TUE in exceptional circumstances, as described in the [International Standard for Therapeutic Use Exemptions](#).

5. External communications

ADOs should keep their stakeholders informed of the impact of COVID-19 on their operations, providing a level of detail that balances transparency with the need to maintain unpredictability in testing activities. ADOs may want to reassure their stakeholders that all health and safety measures are being put in place; and that athletes are still subject to testing unless mandatory restrictions (i.e. isolation/lockdown) have been issued by the national government. It is also important for all ADOs to maintain good collaboration and sharing of information on the situations (and working conditions) in individual countries.

6. Athlete refusal to be tested

- a. Athletes should be reminded that they can still be tested at any place, any time. Unless there is a mandatory government isolation/lockdown, they should proceed with the testing while following the preventative measures put in place by the ADO.
- b. Should an athlete refuse to be tested or not complete the sample collection process after notification, or should they not be able (or willing) to provide a sample due to a lack of protective measures, the sample collection personnel should ensure that the athlete is aware of the potential consequences of a refusal or a failure to submit to sample collection and document it accordingly.
- c. If a potential refusal or failure to submit to sample collection is submitted to the ADO, the typical results management process should be followed and the athlete will have the opportunity to submit their defense, including any reasons why they believe their refusal or failure to complete the process was justified. This information will be taken into account when:
 - 1) the ADO determines if a potential anti-doping rule violation should be asserted, and

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- 2) the disciplinary panel hears the case.

7. Border closures affecting shipment of samples

An ADO should check with their courier companies to determine if they can ship samples abroad before collecting. If an ADO is not able to ship a sample outside of its country due to border closures, it should establish a system where any sample collected is securely stored with proper chain of custody in order to maintain the integrity of the samples (i.e. freeze all urine samples) and then ship the samples as soon as it is possible. For blood collection, the Blood Stability Score within the ISTI and the Technical Document for Growth Hormone outline the required shipping times and conditions to the laboratory and should be used to determine whether blood samples should be collected.

8. Athletes

- a. ADOs should develop a plan to engage with athletes and athlete support personnel as much as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to keep athletes up to date on the measures the ADO is putting in place as well as their rights and responsibilities during the pandemic. The use of virtual tools (webinars) and social media are effective methods to do this.
- b. ADOs should ensure athletes are aware of how to contact the ADO if they have any questions. This should include a phone number that all sample collection personnel can provide to the athlete should there be any concerns during a sample collection session.
- c. ADOs should ensure athletes are aware of:
 - i. The fact that testing can still happen at any place, any time.
 - ii. The need to update their whereabouts if they are in a whereabouts pool. This should include incorporating into their whereabouts any information related to being in quarantine, etc.
 - iii. The protective measures that the ADO has put in place to ensure the health and safety of all those involved in the sample collection process.
 - iv. The importance of ensuring their contact information on the doping control form and in ADAMS is correct to allow the ADO to follow up if needed.
 - v. The need to inform the ADO, should they be tested and subsequently contract COVID-19.
 - vi. The TUE process, should the athlete require a prohibited substance or method.
 - vii. The potential consequences for a refusal or failure to comply; and the need to document everything should this situation arise.

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9. WADA accredited and approved laboratories

- a. Several laboratories have temporarily suspended operations due to the ongoing crisis. WADA anticipates that more laboratories, particularly in Europe, may follow suit.
- b. WADA has, in conjunction with its Laboratory Expert Group, provided comprehensive guidance for laboratories, which includes that laboratories suspending operations must:
 - Inform their clients immediately of this decision and instruct them not to deliver any more samples for analysis if samples cannot be properly handled and stored.
 - Establish a procedure whereby samples that are already on their way to the laboratory can be securely received and either redirected to another accredited laboratory or safely stored frozen for when the laboratory's analytical activity resumes.
 - Devise a strategy for safe analysis of the samples once normal activities resume, bearing in mind that some of the thawed samples may contain the virus.
- c. If the WADA accredited laboratory that the ADO is using is no longer receiving samples due the laboratory closure, the ADO should consider contacting other WADA accredited laboratories who are still fully operational and accepting samples.
- d. ADOs should consult the [WADA website](#) for the latest list of WADA accredited and approved laboratories and their operational status.

10. Other considerations

- a. ADOs can determine how their other activities will be impacted. This may include investigations, results management, etc. ADOs may look at additional ways of continuing certain activities. For example, hearings may be conducted via video conferencing, etc.
- b. During this time of reduced activities, it is a good opportunity for ADOs to plan for the future by reviewing the composition of whereabouts pools to ensure they contain the right athletes, planning targeted testing missions in ADAMS and ensuring that sufficient equipment is available to enable testing to start as quickly and efficiently as possible once the situation returns to normal.
- c. ADOs can also address any outstanding administrative activities, including entry of doping control forms and TUE applications/decisions into ADAMS, etc.
- d. ADOs can continue to collect and assess any information and intelligence received which may result in an investigation or target testing.
- e. The Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) program will assist ADOs in monitoring its testing programs over time. Some doping manipulations or substance intakes have long lasting effects or remain detectable in the body long enough that they can be revealed by an

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efficient ABP program or specific types of analysis. ADOs should plan the collection of ABP blood samples on sports that are part of an existing ABP program as soon as the situation returns to normal.

- f. ADOs are encouraged to consider long term storage of the samples that were collected immediately prior to COVID-19 pandemic and the first samples collected from athletes once the situation returns to normal.
- g. ADOs can finalize their draft anti-doping rules and any other procedures in line with the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code and Standards and provide the drafts to WADA for review.

11. Sample Collection Agencies

Sample collection agencies should:

- a. also follow the requirements and recommendations of the government and national health authorities in countries where they are planning testing missions.
- b. contact the NADO in the relevant country to discuss the practical implications of any government recommendation/requirement, regardless if they are going to engage the NADO in the testing mission. This information should be taken into consideration when deciding to go ahead with a testing mission or not.

12. Compliance

While there are no plans to change existing requirements under the World Anti-Doping Program, WADA fully acknowledges the complexities of this unprecedented situation and will ensure its compliance monitoring program provides a level of flexibility and understanding based on the circumstances. Deadlines for reporting, meeting ongoing requirements or completing corrective actions may be affected. It is important that ADOs keep WADA updated if/when the status of their doping control programs change during this situation. Should you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact your respective WADA contact in Montreal or in one of the Agency's regional offices.