



# PARENTS AND CARERS ANTI-DOPING GUIDE

**FOR** PARENTS AND CARERS

SEASON 2025/26



**FOR** ALL



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# INTRODUCTION

*This resource is designed to help you understand what you can do as a parent or carer to help your child understand their anti-doping responsibilities and actively promote and maintain the integrity of clean sport.*

*Clean sport creates a positive sporting environment for your child, one that places their health, wellbeing and safety above all else and supports their growth and development as people and as players.*

# WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

As a parent or carer, you have a crucial role to play in supporting your child in their development as a clean player. You have a major influence on the values and behaviours they adopt, and this has a direct impact on whether in the pressure of performing, they choose to engage in doping.

We realise that you also have many other roles: first and foremost, you are your child's number one fan, but you're probably also the nutritionist, doctor, banker, taxi driver and psychologist for your child. All these roles have a part to play in their development as a footballer.



## As a parent, when you are part of clean sport you...

- Promote, support, encourage and reward athletic development and your child's efforts over winning.
- Are considerate of health and play your part to encourage proper rest, recovery and good nutrition practices.
- Listen to, and be there for your child- hearing their concerns, demonstrating empathy and supporting them with challenges or helping them find information when you don't have the answers.
- Are educated about all things anti-doping and encourage your child to get educated about anti-doping too.
- Are aware of vulnerable periods for players.
- Ask questions and communicate with your child's club staff when needed.
- Promote and abide by the anti-doping rules and support your child to do the same.
- Speak up to share concerns about doping.
- May fall under the jurisdiction of The FA's Anti-Doping Regulations (see page 4 for further information).

# RISKS AND CONSEQUENCES

In order to minimise risk, it is important that you have a good understanding of the risks your child might face and where they are going to be exposed to them.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) is responsible for global anti-doping rules (known as the World Anti-Doping Code) and regulations and publishes a list of prohibited (banned) substances and methods (known as the Prohibited List).

Just as Football has rules to determine how it is played, there are Anti-Doping Rules in place to protect clean sport. You can find The FA Anti-Doping Regulations, which comply with the WADA Code, in the Anti-Doping section of The FA website.

## STRICT LIABILITY

All players are solely responsible for any banned substance or method they use or that is found in their system, regardless of how it got there and whether there was an intention to cheat or not.

It doesn't matter whether a substance has been taken deliberately or accidentally, a player is responsible for everything they put into their body.



WORLD ANTI-DOPING  
**CODE**  
2021

# WHAT IS DOPING?

The term “doping” refers to the use of prohibited (banned) medications, drugs, or treatments by athletes with the intention of improving athletic performance. However, it’s much more than just a positive test. In a wider sense, doping is defined in the World Anti-Doping Code as the occurrence of one or more of the Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs) see below. Some ADRVs also apply to player support personnel, including coaches. The term ‘player support personnel’ is widely defined and also applies to other individuals, including parents, who are working with, treating or assisting players participating in or preparing for matches or training sessions.



## **PRESENCE**

The presence of a prohibited substance or its metabolites or markers in a player’s sample.

**Ban:** Up to four years\* Applies to players only



## **EVASION, REFUSAL OR FAILURE**

Evading, refusing, or failing to submit to sample collection.

**Ban:** Up to four years\* Applies to players only



## **TAMPERING OR ATTEMPTED TAMPERING**

Tampering or attempted tampering with any part of doping control. The 2021 Code makes it clear that engaging in fraudulent conduct (e.g. submitting falsified documents to an anti-doping organisation or asking a witness to lie in their witness statement) is an act of Tampering. From 1 January 2021, if an individual commits an act of Tampering relating to another ADRV, they can receive an additional consecutive ban.

**Ban:** Up to four years\*

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants



## **TRAFFICKING**

Trafficking or attempted trafficking in any prohibited substance or prohibited method.

**Ban:** Four years to a lifetime

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants



## **COMPLICITY OR ATTEMPTED COMPLICITY**

Assisting, encouraging, aiding, abetting, conspiring, covering up or any other type of intentional complicity or attempted complicity involving an ADRV or any attempted ADRV.

**Ban:** Two years to a lifetime

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants

## **ACTS TO DISCOURAGE OR RETALIATE AGAINST REPORTING TO AUTHORITIES**

Acts that threaten or seek to intimidate another to discourage them from sharing information about doping (also referred to as whistleblowing), or retaliating against another for doing so.

**Ban:** Two years to a lifetime

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants



## **USE**

Use or attempted use by a player of a prohibited substance or a prohibited method.

**Ban:** Up to four years\* Applies to players only



## **POSSESSION**

Possession of a prohibited substance or prohibited method.

**Ban:** Up to four years\*

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants



## **ADMINISTERING OR ATTEMPTED ADMINISTRATION**

Administration or attempted administration to any player of any prohibited substance or prohibited method.

**Ban:** Four years to a lifetime

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants



## **PROHIBITED ASSOCIATION**

Associating in a professional or sport-related capacity with a person such as coach, doctor, physio or trainer who is serving a ban or who has been found guilty of a criminal or disciplinary offence equivalent to a doping violation.

**Ban:** up to two years\*

Applies to players, player support personnel and other participants



\* This ban from sport can be increased by up to an additional two years as part of the aggravating circumstances rule. The bans outlined apply to first violations. Longer bans will be given to second and third offences, with up to a lifetime ban from sport possible.



# PERFORMANCE ENHANCING DRUGS

There are lots of drugs that can improve a player's athletic performance and they are known as performance enhancing drugs. Some examples of drugs that are banned in football are steroids, hormones and stimulants. The list of substances banned in sport including football can be found in the WADA Prohibited List.

Any player, from professional down to apprentices and youth players, caught taking drugs like these can be banned from football for as long as four years for a first offence. If a player takes drugs to cheat, there's no place for them in football and their career will be over very quickly.

It's not just the risk of committing a doping offence that makes performance enhancing drugs dangerous, many substances carry significant health side effects.

- **Anabolic agents** such as nandrolone and testosterone can be abused to aid muscle growth/recovery. However, the side effects can be very severe and include an increased risk of heart attack, liver failure, infertility and testicle shrinkage.
- **EPO** (erythropoietin) can be used to improve oxygen delivery to muscles and therefore improve endurance. However, abuse of this substance can cause blood clots, strokes and may lead to heart attacks.
- **Stimulants** can be used to increase alertness but can lead to a rise in blood pressure and body temperature which can cause major organs to stop working. Often, they are also addictive, can cause mood swings and lead to increased aggression.

## PERIODS WHEN PLAYERS MAY BE MORE VULNERABLE TO DOPING

Research in sport has suggested the following moments may place players at an increased risk of doping.

- Change in clubs/environment
- Change in competition level (e.g. playing above age group)
- Performance setback or plateau
- Overtraining or insufficient recovery time
- Recovering from an injury/rehabilitation
- Lack of resources (such as competent training professionals, sports training information and technology)
- Breakdown of personal relationships (with parents, peers, etc.)
- Emotional instability caused by life transitions
- Upcoming career-determining events/high stakes placed on performance (team selection, scouting activities, scholarships, contracts)



# HOW DOES A PLAYER KNOW WHICH MEDICATIONS THEY CAN TAKE?

In order to best support your child, ensure you can confidently answer these questions:

- Do you have a medicine cupboard that your child uses or has access to, or are you responsible for providing medication to your child?
- Do you know everything that is in there?
- Can you be certain there are no prohibited substances in any of the products? Even over the counter remedies for coughs and flu can contain prohibited substances.
- Do you know exactly what your GP is prescribing for your child, and whether there are prohibited substances within it?
- Do you and your child know how to check medications to ensure they do not contain any prohibited substances?

Players can check medication they take using a website called Global DRO ([www.globaldro.com](http://www.globaldro.com)), to be certain that they avoid taking medications which may contain prohibited substances. You can do this for all the medications – prescribed ones as well as those bought over the counter – that you keep in the house and make certain that the whole family is aware of this.

Global DRO can be used to check any medication bought in the UK, USA, Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and Switzerland. It will check all the ingredients against the WADA Prohibited List and give you an instant answer on the status of the medication. You must enter the full brand name of the product and give some information regarding where you bought it and detail the sport in which your child competes, all of which should take less than five minutes.

When checking medication on Global DRO, the status of the substance will be provided for in-competition (on a match-day) and out-of-competition (at any other time) and will be one of the following:

- **Prohibited** – The substance is prohibited in this form and will return a positive test if found in a player's system.
- **Conditional** – There is a limit to the amount of this substance a player can have present in their body, or there are conditions on the methods of its use (e.g. it can only be inhaled and not taken in tablet form). This is clearly detailed and care should be taken when taking a prescribed dose.
- **Not prohibited** – The substance is not currently on the WADA Prohibited List.

## CONSULTING YOUR DOCTOR

It is of vital importance that when visiting the doctor, you ensure that they are fully aware of your child's participation in sport and the extra care they must take with medications. You can access Global DRO on a smartphone, so why not check the medication before the GP prescribes it? What if the medication prescribed by the doctor contains a prohibited substance?

Firstly, ask the GP if there are any alternatives to the medication they are prescribing which do not contain the ingredient. If this is not possible, and it is vital that the medication is taken to treat a condition, then your child may be eligible to apply for a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) which, if granted, will enable the use of the substance. To find out more about TUEs visit the UKAD website, [www.ukad.org.uk](http://www.ukad.org.uk).



# WHAT ARE THE RISKS WITH TAKING SUPPLEMENTS?

Due to the physical demands of football, players may be tempted to take supplements as part of their diet. Supplement companies are largely unregulated – meaning you can never know exactly what is contained in a supplement product. Some products have been found to contain banned substances that are not listed on the label and there could be a banned substance in your supplement.

## ASSESS THE NEED

Prior to using a supplement product, it is important that young players, particularly when still growing and developing, assess the need to use them. Are there other ways to improve training and performance? Could they achieve gains through adaptations to their diet or better rest and recovery strategies?

The food first approach of a good balanced diet combined with the principles of sports nutrition should provide your child with the energy they need. Nutritional deficiencies diagnosed by a medical professional – a lack of iron, for example – may be an exception where a supplement is required for young athletes. You should consult a medical professional for nutritional advice to ensure that any decision to use a supplement is valid and justified.

## ASSESS THE RISK

There is a risk when taking supplements that they may contain a prohibited substance.

Contamination is a risk associated with supplement use, and counterfeit supplement products have been reported among those purchased over the Internet.



Informed-Sport provides a batch-testing service to the supplement industry and tests supplements against a number of, but not all – prohibited substances, to reduce the risk of known contamination. To find out if a product has been batch tested, visit [www.informed-sport.com](https://www.informed-sport.com). Remember, even with batch testing, there is no guarantee that any supplement is completely free of prohibited substances.

## ASSESS THE CONSEQUENCES

If a player tests positive for a banned substance contained in a supplement, they could face a four-year ban from football.

All players have the responsibility to undertake thorough research of any supplement product prior to use. Many inadvertent doping cases involve supplements.

# THE BASICS OF ANTI-DOPING TESTING

## WHY DOES DRUG TESTING EXIST?

1. Provide public assurance that a player's performance is clean.
2. Act as a deterrent to a doping decision.
3. Detect doping, finding those who choose to cheat.

The first thing to remember is that players can be tested anywhere and at any time. Players can be asked to provide urine and/or blood samples and will always be chaperoned throughout the process.

The FA strongly encourages all players to take a representative with them if notified for testing. This representative may well be you, the parent, carer or guardian, but it could also be their coach, physio or another support person. As a representative, you should ensure that you are happy with the testing process at any stage, so do ask questions if you are not. Your child, the player, is also entitled to ask questions at any stage of the process to ensure that they too are happy and confident.

Your child, the player, has a number of rights and responsibilities within the testing procedure that are important to remember. These rights and responsibilities are as follows:

- To be notified by a Chaperone or Doping Control Officer (DCO) with official identification and evidence of his/her authority from an anti-doping organisation.
- To be accompanied to the Doping Control Station (DCS) by a representative of their choice, and an interpreter, if required and available (more information below).
- Your child will be observed providing their urine sample by a DCO/Chaperone of the same gender as them (more information below).
- Your child will receive a copy of the Doping Control Form after the test has finished (this may be an electronic form).
- Confidentiality – no name should be on any documentation that is to be sent to the laboratory.
- Request a delay (under strict circumstances – more information below).
- Request a modification to the doping control process where the athlete is a minor or has an impairment.

## THE URINE TESTING PROCEDURE

Remember, testing should be seen as a positive service to players. The process is outlined by the Doping Control Personnel and player's and/or representatives can ask for as much information throughout. The process of testing is the same for both adults and minors, however there are some modifications required for Minors. As a parent and carer of a player, it may be helpful to know the stages of a test.

Firstly, your child will be notified of selection for testing. An adult must be present for notification of Minors. Your child is then required to report to the Doping Control Station (DCS) immediately and will be chaperoned throughout the whole process. A player has the right to ask for a delay in reporting to the DCS. However, these are under strict circumstances such as; attending an award ceremony, warming down, medical treatment, locating photo ID, further competition, finding a representative or justified exceptional circumstances.

During the process the Doping Control Personnel (DCP) will explain the testing procedure in detail to your child, the player, and representative (if present). Your child will then be guided through selecting their sample collection vessel before being chaperoned to the toilet to proceed with providing their urine sample under supervision. **Please remember, the DCP must have an unobstructed view of the passing of the urine.** Once the sample has been provided, your child is then chaperoned back to the DCS where they will select their sampling kit, followed by dividing and sealing the sample, testing the concentration of the sample and finally recording and certifying the information. If your child does have a representative, they will sign the Doping Control Form as a witness to the proceedings.

## BLOOD TESTING PROCEDURE

For players that have been selected for blood testing only, the notification process is the same as urine testing. Prior to the sample collection the DCO will explain the blood sample collection procedure to the player (including modifications for Minors).

A Blood Collection Officer (BCO) will be responsible for collecting a blood sample from a player. For a standard blood test, players are

required to remain in a normal seated position with feet on the floor for a minimum of 10 minutes before providing a sample.

Following the required rest period, the player is then directed through the process of selecting blood sample packs, providing a sample (in a seated position where possible), aftercare post sample collection, sealing the sample and finally completing the relevant paperwork.

## IN-COMPETITION AND OUT-OF-COMPETITION TESTING

It is important to know that some substances are prohibited in-competition only and others are prohibited at all times.

- **In-Competition** – Unless otherwise stated, the in-competition period is the period commencing at 23:59 on the day before a Match in which the Player is scheduled to participate through to the end of said Match and including the Sample collection process relating to said Match.
- **Out-of-Competition** – This is defined as all other times outside of the in-competition period.

Remember, it doesn't matter when a substance is taken. If a prohibited substance is found in a player's system on a match day, even if it was taken at another time, they will likely face a ban.

Refusing a test, or a positive test are only two of the ways in which your child, can break the anti-doping rules. Don't forget there are multiple ADRVs players can be sanctioned for. So always encourage your child to undertake their test if they are notified and to understand they are strictly liable for what is found within their body.



## TESTING OF MINORS (UNDER 18'S)

As a parent or guardian of a Minor (under 18) you will have to give consent to The FA to ensure you are happy for your child to be selected for doping control. This is achieved through signing your child's academy player registration application.

It is important to be aware that by not giving parental consent you could be stopping your child competing.

To support your child it is important to understand the basics of the testing procedure in relation to Minors. First thing to remember is minors must be notified with an adult present, whether this is another member of the Doping Control Personnel (DCP), a coach, a manager and so on. If an adult is not present, notification will be paused until another adult can be located to be present at the notification. The player may be chaperoned by the DCP member to locate another adult. At no point will the DCP be left alone with an unaccompanied minor following notification.

Minors' rights and responsibilities are identical to those of an adult. During a urine sample collection, a DCP of the same gender will ask for an unobstructed view of the passing of the urine sample.

Therefore, they will ask the athlete to remove any clothing that obstructs that view (i.e. shirt pulled to mid-torso, sleeves rolled up and trousers pulled down to mid-thigh). The DCP must always have a representative (second observer) present observing them during the sample collection. This may be another member of the DCP or another adult approved by the Lead Doping Control Officer (DCO).

This second observer may be accompanied by the player's representative. Neither the second observer or the player's representative should directly observe the passing of the urine, unless requested by the player.

## SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE FOR YOU

It is vital that you as the parent feel confident in your understanding of the testing procedure and what to expect. Remember, throughout the testing procedure your child, and you, the representative, are welcome to ask as many questions to the DCP as you need.

Finally, testing is a positive service helping to protect the integrity of sport. All DCP involved in the testing procedures are trained fully and have been through thorough DBS checks as part of their application. If you or your child would like more information, then please head to the anti-doping section of The FA website where you can find more information on the testing procedure.



# WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF SOCIAL DRUGS?

Social drugs (such as cocaine, cannabis and ecstasy) are **banned at all times in football.**

- Social drugs are illegal, addictive and can seriously damage your child's health.
- Players may face a ban and/or a fine if they test positive for a social drug.
- Hair samples, in addition to urine samples, may also be collected from players to determine whether a player has used social drugs.
- The FA's Social Drug Programme, which operates separately from the Anti-Doping Programme, has an increased focus on education and rehabilitation.


## IS ALCOHOL BANNED?

Alcohol is not banned in football but in almost all cases where players have tested positive for social drugs, they have been drunk at the time. Alcohol may also affect their ability to say no to taking drugs.

BANNED FROM FOOTBALL  
TERMINATED CONTRACT  
PUBLIC SHAME  
ADDICTION

IS IT  
WORTH  
IT?

From the 2021/22 season The FA Social Drug Programme will be run completely separately from the Anti-Doping Programme. Hair samples will be the primary collection method, enabling a quicker process and providing an increased detection window. For more information please visit [thefa.com/anti-doping](https://thefa.com/anti-doping).

 For All ANTI-DOPING



# HOW DO YOU REPORT DOPING IN FOOTBALL?

Protecting clean sport depends on everyone playing their part - athletes, coaches, or parents - whether on centre stage or behind the scenes. Speak out if you feel something's wrong - no matter how small.

There are three ways to contact UK Anti-Doping if you want to speak out:

- Email: [pys@reportdoping.com](mailto:pys@reportdoping.com)
- Online form: [www.protectyoursport.co.uk](http://www.protectyoursport.co.uk)

You can also contact The FA via email at [Anti-Doping@TheFA.com](mailto:Anti-Doping@TheFA.com).

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YOUR  
SPORT**





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