

The real Dope on Drug testing by Dr. Bob

Canadian Masters Doping Advisory

There is no doubt that doping exists, especially in the professional sports, but also in Masters Competitions. Master's age athletes have been and will be tested in future for performance enhancing drugs to ensure fair competition. The purpose of this note and newsletters that may follow will be to educate Canadian Masters Athletes on what may be tested for and **how not to be a "false positive" drug testing victim**. It is proposed to have a consultative service or forum for Canadian Master Athletes who are unsure if medications or dietary supplements that they are taking might get them labelled as performance enhancing drug abusers. Seminars may be given at National Championships and on demand to inform our athletes. The World Masters Athletics (WMA) website has the most complete and relevant information for Master athletes. Most important for Masters is the **Therapeutic Use Exemption** rules and form to submit to the WMA authority before competition.

Dope testing these days is sophisticated and trustworthy but is expensive to perform to a high enough standard of accuracy and precision and so has not become widely used yet. **Urine or blood samples may be taken before or after competition** and sent to a World anti-doping Agency (WADA) accredited laboratory for analysis. The sample is handled under the kind of security used in forensic police work. The fluid is divided into two aliquots. Analysis is made on one specimen and the second is kept frozen under secure lock and key.

If a positive result is found on the first specimen then the second once is tested. If both are positive then **the athlete is called to account and considered guilty unless they can prove that they are innocent**. Innocence is extremely hard to prove so it is by far best to avoid getting into that situation. The process to prove innocence may also be very costly and embarrassing to the athlete and their family and friends.

Those of you who follow the news know of horror stories. Here are some:

Rogaine, a hair restorer that is also used in prostate disease, was used by a Canadian Olympic ice hockey goalkeeper. However, it is a banned substance because it masks the use of anabolic steroids. The goal keeper concerned said that it was a ridiculous ban because anabolic steroids are a class of drugs that goalkeepers would not take. That showed his ignorance because anabolic steroids improve reaction times.

Sometimes athletes say that the performance enhancing drug found in their urine came from contaminated food. Recently the Tour de France winner used this defence. Korean wrestlers in 1988 claimed to have inadvertently eaten a dog that was on anabolic steroids. A Canadian Athlete excused herself by saying that an herbal tea had the performance enhancing drug in it and she did not know this. Another Canadian, in her

defence, said that a meat based supplement from Argentina probably caused the positive result. These excuses that may well have been true were not respected.

For Master Athletes the biggest concern should be the pharmaceutical products given to help them with chronic disease and the activities of daily living. For example in loss of sex drive post-menopausal women may wear a testosterone patch. An American woman at a World Masters Championship used this defence. This excuse was not accepted.

My advice to you is:

1. **Make a list of the medications that you are taking and the physician who prescribed them. Check medications with the website of the World Masters Athletics. Prepare a Therapeutic Use Exemption form, if needed.**
2. **Do not take dietary supplements from dubious sources. Keep a list of any supplements that you do take and check them for purity as best you can.** For example, it is not unusual to find “natural” products for common conditions such as arthritis that have anabolic steroids added. This will not be on the product label – if there is one.

Protect yourself with knowledge

In future notes to you I plan to elaborate on medications and supplements used by older athletes that may give positive results. I will also give my experience to explain my authority, how I got involved in doping control concerns. I will try to answer any questions given to me by Master Athletes about doping control issues.

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(Bob is in the [CMA Hall Of Fame](#))

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