

Q&A: Status of Finasteride

How is the WADA Prohibited List prepared?

- Refining the List of Prohibited Substances and Methods is an important responsibility in WADA's work and one of the key tools in the harmonization of the global fight against doping in sport. It is an elaborate and dynamic process involving international scientific experts and the solicitation of input from stakeholders so that changes are founded on expanding scientific knowledge and understanding of doping practices and trends.
- As all Lists published since WADA took over this responsibility from the IOC in 2004, the 2009 List was the subject of an extensive consultation process involving WADA's stakeholders and all those interested in the fight against doping in sport. Following extensive consultation and review by WADA's scientific committees, the 2009 List was approved by WADA's Executive Committee at its September 20, 2008, meeting.
- The 2009 List reflects the expanding scientific knowledge, as well as advances in anti-doping science.

Why and when was finasteride included in the List?

- Finasteride is a substance contained in particular in a number of hair loss treatments. It was added to the List in 2005 (in- and out-of-competition) following compelling research showing that they could mask steroids in the doping control process. When needed by the athletes, and no reasonable alternative was available, the substance was accessible to athletes under the Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) process and many athletes obtained TUEs.
- At that time, science did not allow laboratories to reliably circumvent the masking properties of finasteride and of other alpha reductase inhibitors as part of the analysis of doping control samples. As a result, WADA added finasteride to the List based on its demonstrated potential to mask some doping substances.

Why was finasteride removed from the 2009 List?

- The masking effect of alpha reductase inhibitors remains. However, following recent advances in anti-doping science, anti-doping laboratories have now been able to render it ineffective through close consideration of steroid profiles. As a result, WADA agreed that this class of substances can now be removed from the List starting on January 1, 2009.

- This status change is the direct consequence of new research and advances in anti-doping science. In particular, as part of the development by WADA of the Athlete Passport concept (the objective of which is to monitor an athlete's biological parameters in order to detect abnormal variations that could indicate potential doping; as part of the development of this longitudinal follow-up), all WADA-accredited laboratories are now able to and have to systematically and closely consider steroid profiles in urine as part of the doping control process, which allows them to circumvent the masking agent properties of alpha reductase inhibitors.
- While WADA can understand the discomfort of those athletes who neglected to obtain a TUE and consequently were sanctioned for taking alpha reductase inhibitors, one has to keep in mind that the List is prepared on existing science and that anti-doping science progresses quickly for the benefit of clean athletes worldwide.
- As in every area of society, one has to abide by the rules in force at the time of the particular event.
- WADA spends a significant part of its total budget (approximately one quarter) in research. Since 2001, WADA has committed nearly US\$44 million to scientific research in order to develop detection methods and to enhance scientific knowledge and understanding of doping practices and trends.
- The example of alpha reductase inhibitors shows the importance of scientific research. Research allows to reveal the doping potential of drugs, but also to find reliable alternatives when it can be avoided to have substances systematically included in the List.