

Cannabis is consumed by all population groups. Athletes however should be aware that special sports law rules apply to them. We summarize important information on the consumption of cannabis and hemp products in sports in this info sheet.

If you have further questions, please contact NADA Germany's medical department by e-mail (medizin@nada.de) or by phone (+49 (0) 288 12 92-132).

### 1. How is the use of cannabis and cannabinoids regulated in sports?

The use of cannabis and cannabinoids is prohibited in-competition according to WADA's Prohibited List<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the detection of cannabis or cannabinoids in an in-competition doping-sample can constitute an anti-doping rule violation even when the use was restricted to the out-of-competition period. Cannabinoids comprise the substances delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and others present in cannabis, hashish and marijuana as well as synthetic cannabinoids that mimic the effects of THC. THC is also defined as a substance of abuse in terms of the World Anti-Doping Code<sup>2</sup>.

The only exception to the ban is the substance cannabidiol (CBD) which is not prohibited. For more information see also question 5.

Cannabinoids can be detected in urine for several weeks after consumption. Therefore, professional athletes should refrain from using cannabis in general.

### 2. Does the partial legalization of cannabis in Germany affect the use of cannabinoids in sports?

No, the partial legalization of cannabis in Germany does not affect WADA's international regulations.

The detection of cannabinoids (except for CBD) in an in-competition doping-sample can still constitute an anti-doping rule violation and can lead to sanctions.

### 3. Does a passive consumption of Cannabis (e.g. at Parties) lead to an unintentional doping risk?

WADA has set a threshold for carboxy-THC (the main metabolite of THC) which is valid worldwide. Thus, in-competition doping samples with a carboxy-THC concentration of more than 150 ng/ml urine are considered positive, samples with less than 150 ng/ml urine are considered negative.

This means that athletes who consume THC shortly before or during a competition or who regularly consume THC have a high risk of a positive in-competition doping sample.

The threshold was set by WADA to reduce positive doping samples which are potentially due to the use of THC out-of-competition or due to unintentional passive consumption. Nevertheless, NADA Germany recommends reducing the passive use of and exposition to cannabis as much as possible, especially shortly before competitions.

<sup>1</sup> The World Anti-Doping Code. The 2024 Prohibited List. International Standard. 1.1.2024

<sup>2</sup> The World Anti-Doping Code 2021

#### **4. Is it possible for athletes to use medicinal cannabis or THC-containing pharmaceuticals for therapeutic reasons?**

As with other prohibited substances, athletes can apply for a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) for medicinal cannabis and THC-containing pharmaceuticals in case of disease.

Athletes who are member of NADA Germany's testing pool or certain professional German sports leagues must apply for a TUE before the use of a substance.

Athletes who are not member of NADA Germany's testing pool or a league that is requiring a TUE in advance must apply for a retroactive TUE only after a doping test and upon request by NADA Germany. For international competitions, non-testing pool athletes should consult with their international sports federation and ask them about the applicable rules for TUEs.

A TUE can only be granted if certain criteria are met. For example, the medication must be needed to treat a diagnosed medical condition. The medication must also be indicated for the treatment of the disease and there must be no, reasonable, permitted alternative treatments available. For a TUE application, extensive and detailed medical documentation by a specialist physician must be submitted.

Even if cannabis or THC-containing pharmaceuticals have been prescribed by a doctor, this does not mean that the above criteria are necessarily met!

In WADA's TUE Physician Guidelines, cannabinoids are currently only mentioned as an option for the treatment of chronic, especially neuropathic pain.<sup>3</sup>

Athletes who are planning a therapy with cannabis or THC-containing pharmaceuticals should contact NADA Germany in advance about the requirements for a TUE.

#### **5. Is the consumption of CBD products or hemp products safe?**

CBD and hemp products are sold in Germany as dietary supplements, food products, cosmetics or aromatic oils, among others.

CBD and hemp products may contain unknown concentrations of THC and other cannabinoids.<sup>4</sup> There is practically no independent control of the THC content in these products. Even though the labels on CBD and hemp products often state that the THC content is very low, this statement cannot be verified by the athletes.

Athletes should be aware that the unintentional ingestion of prohibited substances can also constitute an anti-doping rule violation.

NADA Germany therefore recommends refraining from consuming any CBD and hemp products for safety reasons.

*Last updated: June 2024*

*This info sheet is also available in German.*

<sup>3</sup> [www.wada-ama.org/en/resources/therapeutic-use-exemption/tue-physician-guidelines-pain-management](http://www.wada-ama.org/en/resources/therapeutic-use-exemption/tue-physician-guidelines-pain-management)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.verbraucherzentrale.de/wissen/lebensmittel/kennzeichnung-und-inhaltsstoffe/hanf-samen-hanf-foel-hanf-tee-wie-steht-es-mit-der-sicherheit-12881>