

SUPPLEMENT

Therapeutic use exemption

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Football players who have either physical symptoms or disease after injury may need to be treated with specific medicines that are on the list of prohibited substances. Therapeutic use exemption may be granted to such players, in accordance with strictly defined criteria—these are presented in this article. Procedures of how to request for an abbreviated or a standard therapeutic use exemption are explained, and data on therapeutic use exemptions (UEFA and FIFA, 2004 and 2005) are also presented.

A football player who has physical symptoms and signs or acute or chronic disease following an injury may need to be treated with a medicine that is on the list of prohibited substances. A therapeutic use exemption (TUE) permitting the use of such a substance or method that is on the prohibited list, may be granted to the player, depending to the clinical situation.

An exemption will be granted only in strict accordance with the following criteria¹:

- The player shall submit an application for TUE no less than 21 days before participating in an event.
- The player would experience a significant impairment to health if the prohibited substance or method were to be withheld in the course of treating an acute or chronic medical condition.
- The therapeutic use of the prohibited substance or method would produce no additional enhancement of performance other than that which might be anticipated by a return to a state of normal health following the treatment of a legitimate medical condition. The use of any prohibited substance or method to increase “low-normal” levels of any endogenous hormone is not considered an acceptable therapeutic intervention.
- There is no reasonable therapeutic alternative to the use of the otherwise prohibited substance or method.
- The necessity for the otherwise prohibited substance or method cannot be a consequence, wholly or in part, or prior non-therapeutic use of any substance from the prohibited list.
- The TUE will be cancelled by the granting body, if:
 - The player does not promptly comply with any requirements or conditions imposed by the FIFA [Fédération Internationale de Football Association] Doping Control Sub-Committee granting the exemption.
 - The term for which the TUE was granted has expired.
 - The player is advised that the TUE has been withdrawn by the FIFA Doping Control Sub-Committee.
- An application for a TUE will not be considered for retroactive approval except in cases where:

- Emergency treatment or treatment of an acute medical condition was necessary, or
- Due to exceptional circumstances, there was insufficient time or opportunity for an applicant to submit, or the granting body to consider, an application prior to doping control.

- Confidentiality of information: The applicant shall provide written consent for the transmission of all information pertaining to the application to members of the FIFA granting body and, as required, other independent medical or relevant scientific experts. If the assistance of external, independent experts is required, all details of the application will be circulated without identifying the player involved in the doctor's care. The applicant shall also give written consent to the decisions of the FIFA granting body to be distributed to the involved medical personnel of other relevant anti-doping organisations under the provisions of the FIFA Doping Control Regulations. The members of the granting body involved will conduct all of their activities in strict confidence according to the Hippocratic Oath and the medico-legal and ethical rules of confidentiality.

FIFA proposes using the standard application forms for the TUE applications as described in the “International Standard for TUE”² (downloadable from WADA website (www.wada-ama.org/rtecontent/document/standard.pdf and www.wada-ama.org/rtecontent/document/simplified.pdf) or FIFA forms (downloadable from www.fifa.com/documents/fifa/regulations/FIFA_Standard%20TUE%20form_E.pdf and www.fifa.com/documents/fifa/regulations/FIFA_Abbreviated%20TUE%20form_E.pdf).

As a result of the agreement between the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and FIFA to implement the requirements of the WADC, in March 2004, FIFA and all other football confederations immediately introduced a TUE process for all national and international players participating in the different competitions. The WADA TUE-committee is informed about any approval and rejection and FIFA will disclose any information to the medical staff of WADA on request.

Abbreviations: TUE, therapeutic use exemption, WADA, World Anti-Doping Agency; WADC, World Anti-Doping Code

Table 1 Procedure for therapeutic use exemption (TUE)

For	TUE application to be addressed to	Request made by
National players participating in domestic competitions only (this includes friendly matches abroad)	FIFA member association, a national anti-doping organisation, or a competent public authority or association	Player and club doctor
International players called up to participate in international team competitions and international friendly matches	FIFA/confederations	Player and national team doctor
International players participating in club competitions	FIFA/confederations	Player and club doctor
International players called up by member association in FIFA competitions (that is, 2006 World Cup qualifiers)	FIFA	Player and national team doctor

In agreement with FIFA, and according to article 4.4 of the WADA code,³ the TUE applications procedure has been put into operation for football players as shown in table 1. To avoid misunderstandings, players and team doctors have been told that a TUE request may be submitted to only one body at a time. The same TUE request may NOT be submitted to several different bodies. To deal with these TUE requests, FIFA and the confederations have created, according to the WADA International Standard, their own panels of independent doctors, called therapeutic use exemption committees (TUECs). These committees review each request and the medical evidence before granting a TUE.

WADA has designed two TUE forms—abbreviated and standard—one of which is selected and used depending on the treatment needed by the player (table 2).

ABBREVIATED TUE

Abbreviated TUE requests are valid as soon as FIFA, or a confederation, or a member association's TUEC has received the request. Treatment may start immediately after the receipt is confirmed. However, the TUEC has the right to ask for additional information should the applied indication for glucocorticosteroids or β_2 agonists appear doubtful. FIFA has also decided that for a β_2 agonist TUE, following a clinical diagnosis of exercise induced or allergic asthma the results of lung function tests have to be submitted to substantiate the clinical diagnosis. This decision of the FIFA Medical Committee clearly stresses the importance of sound clinical diagnosis following state of the art assessment to avoid misuse of β_2 agonists in the absence of clear clinical diagnosis. In this respect FIFA endorses the May 2001 statement of the IOC (International Olympic Committee) Medical Committee workshop on asthma and β_2 agonists.⁴

STANDARD TUE

In the case of a standard TUE application for which specialist expertise is required, the TUE committee appoints external independent experts for a second opinion to justify the decision. Standard TUE requests are valid as soon as FIFA or a confederation has sent the player a certificate of approval, except in rare cases of an acute life threatening condition, for which retroactive approval may be considered.

What is already known

TUEs are indispensable for improving medical cover of athletes with health impairments while avoiding anti-doping violations. However, many physicians are still unaware of the requirements and procedures for applying for a TUE.

Table 2 Indications for abbreviated and standard therapeutic use exemption (TUE)

Abbreviated TUE	Standard TUE
Use the abbreviated TUE form only for glucocorticosteroids administered by non-systemic routes (locally) and for β_2 agonists (formoterol, salbutamol, salmeterol, and terbutaline) by inhalation	Use the standard TUE form for any treatment involving a substance or method on the Prohibited List that is not admissible for an abbreviated TUE
Dermatological glucocorticosteroids do NOT require a TUE anymore	
Granted automatically upon receipt of the completed application by the relevant organisation (a check by the TUEC may be carried out at any time during the duration of the TUE)	Will be examined by the TUEC

Table 3 Documentation of approved therapeutic use exemptions (TUEs): FIFA and UEFA

Year	Abbreviated TUEs		Standard TUEs	
	UEFA	FIFA	UEFA	FIFA
2004	251	140	14	23
2005	299	101	20	11

DATA ON USE OF CURRENT PROCEDURE

The process of application for a TUE was introduced systematically within the FIFA member associations and confederations after the introduction of the WADC in 2003. FIFA receives applications for TUEs from players participating in international competitions, such as qualifying matches for world cups (male and female and different age groups) and for the final competition of the world cups. The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), on the other hand, receives applications for confederation competitions, such as

What is new

The article summarises the criteria for granting a TUE, describes the correct procedure to be followed when requesting a TUE, and explains the differences between an abbreviated and standard TUE request.

Euro 2004, and international club competitions, such as the Champions League. The total number of approved abbreviated and standard TUEs issued by the FIFA and UEFA in 2004 and 2005 are summarised in table 3.

The application process operates in a way that there is mutual recognition of the approval by member associations, the confederations, and FIFA. However, FIFA, if informed, reviews the application and decision of the member association, and FIFA has the right of appeal. Once a TUE has been approved, the confidential medical information is filed at FIFA and a copy of the approval is sent to WADA according to the WADC international standard for therapeutic use exemption.

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- 4 International Olympic Committee press release. Available at www.olympic.org/uk/news/media_centre/press_release_uk.asp?id=439 (accessed 3 May 2006).