



**SPORT INTEGRITY  
AUSTRALIA**

# GLUCOCORTICOID CHANGES

## BACKGROUND

Glucocorticoid (GC) injections are commonly prescribed for the management of medical conditions which include:

- Inflammation in joints, bursa or tendon sheaths.
- For neural impingement syndromes and disc pathology (epidural).
- For severe allergies such as anaphylaxis.

From 1 January 2022, all GC injections will be prohibited in-competition. Previously some routes of GC injection were permitted in-competition (e.g. local, joint) but now all injectable GCs will be prohibited in-competition, making their classification consistent with oral GC preparations.

Athletes who require an in-advance Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) will need to apply prior to receiving a GC injection in the competition period.

If the athlete is eligible to apply for a retroactive TUE, they need to prepare a medical file in case they are required to complete doping control and subsequently apply for a retroactive TUE.

You can use the Sport Integrity app to check an athletes TUE requirements.

If an injection is administered in the pre-competition period there may be persisting presence of the substance in the doping control sample of an athlete, because of the varying washout period of GCs. Athletes do not need to apply for an in-advance TUE for injections administered prior to competition (in the GC washout period), but need to prepare a medical record in case they

are selected for doping control and the GC is detected during testing.

WADA advises that most commonly used GCs for injection have a washout period of between 3 and 5 days, but some, such as Triamcinolone are longer and can be up to 60 days for intra-muscular injection. We encourage physicians to avoid Triamcinolone due to its long washout period, and use other glucocorticoids where possible, unless there is a specific reason why this GC is clinically indicated.

# THE MAXIMUM MANUFACTURER'S LICENSED DOSES

Administration route	GC	Washout period*
Oral	All GC	3 days
	<b>Except:</b> triamcinolone	10 days
Intramuscular	Betamethasone, dexamethasone, methylprednisolone	5 days
	Prednisolone, prednisone	10 days
	Triamcinolone acetonide	60 days
Local Injections (intra-articular, periarticular, peritendinous...)	All GCs	3 days
	<b>Except:</b> triamcinolone acetonide, triamcinolone hexacetonide, prednisolone, prednisone	10 days

Reference: Ventura R, Daley-Yates P, Mazzoni I, et al. A novel approach to improve detection of glucocorticoid doping in sport with new guidance for physicians prescribing for athletes. *British Journal of Sports Medicine* 2021;55:631-642.

**\*Washout period** refers to the time from the last administered dose to the time of the start of the in-competition period (i.e. beginning at 11:59p.m. on the day before a Competition in which the Athlete is scheduled to participate, unless a different period was approved by WADA for a given sport). This is to allow elimination of the glucocorticoid to below the reporting level.

Medical records are required when an athlete applies for a TUE and should be prepared for both washout period injections and for in-competition injections. Medical records must include:

- A medical diagnosis where GC injection is a recognised treatment. This should be sufficient for the TUE committee to make the diagnosis independently
- A permitted alternative was tried, not available or not considered the best treatment option
- The GC type given, dose and route (such as a copy of the radiologists report if the injection is given under ultrasound or X-ray guidance).

Some GCs have longer washout periods and may remain in the athletes system for up to 10 weeks. It might be difficult to identify the exact injection that contributed to an atypical in-competition test, which makes it even more important for physicians to practice good medicine with appropriate clinical record keeping.