



*South African Institute for
Drug-Free Sport*



PARENTS' GUIDE TO SUPPORT
CLEAN SPORT

YOUR ROLE AS PARENT




As parents or guardians, you know that the pressure to train hard, compete and achieve at a high level can lead athletes to entertain dangerous options presented as shortcuts, such as extreme dieting, excessive training, taking supplements and doping.

The importance of your role as parents to help your children achieve their sporting goals, while also teaching them respect for and appreciation of the true spirit of sport, cannot be over-emphasized. You must be the consistent voice promoting safety, good health, integrity, balance and enjoyment of clean sport throughout their pursuit of excellence. This resource is designed to help you enhance your children's knowledge of how to protect themselves in their sport or career.



PROMOTING GOOD VALUES



Sport can enhance work ethic, respect, friendship, joy, resilience and healthy lifestyles. However, if these values are not ingrained, sport can also encourage cheating, lying, arrogance and winning at the expense of personal health and integrity. Here is a list of things you can do to promote good values:



Teach children to respect their opponents and themselves, to value skill development above winning, to win and lose with dignity, and respect the true spirit of sport.



Model these values for your children by encouraging and praising them regardless of the outcome of their competition; by keeping positive in the stands as you watch their match; and by speaking positively about their opponents once the competition is over.



Rank respect, personal improvement, integrity and equity above winning. Remind your child of these priorities regularly.



Open up a dialogue with your child to discuss the values promoted in their sport / club / training centre.



Emphasize that participation in sport is most importantly about personal growth and development into the best version of themselves.



Notice when children take shortcuts or cheat to win and use the situation as an opportunity for learning. Start a conversation about ethics and the dangers of performance enhancing drugs. Make it clear that you expect your child to avoid them and compete with integrity.

FURTHER INFORMATION



The Ride Home, True Sport, 2016

True Sport Parent Handbook, US Anti-Doping Agency, 2016

IDENTIFYING A HEALTHY SPORT CULTURE

The sport culture or environment your children spend significant time in will have an impact on their thinking. Assess whether it is a beneficial one that will enhance their growth and development. Here is a list of ways you can identify a healthy sport culture:



Look for key support personnel and assess whether they create a supportive culture – one that values respect, personal growth and equity.



Does the coach lead with integrity and good character? Is the coach invested in continual learning?



Determine if perceived failures are seen as opportunities for learning.



Find out if peers are encouraging of others while striving to better themselves.



Monitor stress levels.

Consider removing your child from an unhealthy sport culture.

FINDING BALANCE



Teach them to be organized with schedules, calendars and agendas.



Teach children to seek help and ask for what they need when they are feeling overwhelmed.



Prioritize health, enough sleep and proper nutrition.

Young athletes need your guidance to learn how to balance their many responsibilities, from demanding training schedules to schoolwork to time with family and friends. These are ways you can help your child find balance.

FURTHER INFORMATION



Supporting Your Child's Development, UK Anti-Doping, 2016
Canadian Sport for Life – A Sport Parent's Guide

NUTRITION

The right food and hydration choices increase the odds of optimal athletic performance and lifelong health. Here is a list of ways you can promote proper nutrition:



Model good nutrition and hydration choices for your child.



Promote body positivity and encourage a healthy relationship with food.



Teach your child to read ingredient lists and how to read food labels.



Inform yourself about the appropriate diet for your child and consult a nutritionist / dietician for specific advice and menus if possible.



Plan meals ahead and keep your kitchen stocked with healthy food choices.



Try to ensure your child never gets too hungry, as this is when poor selections happen.

THE RISKS OF SUPPLEMENTS

A planned and balanced diet can meet all of a competitive athlete's nutritional needs. There is little if any evidence indicating that supplements are needed to complement a healthy diet, and they can pose a risk to both the health and career of athletes. Here are some key pieces of information you need to know:



The supplements industry is **highly unregulated**.



There is **NO GUARANTEE** that supplements are free of prohibited substances!



Excellent nutrition is the safest and best way to facilitate peak athletic performance, promote clean sport and establish healthy life-long eating habits.



There are safety issues with certain supplements – some present serious risks to health and anti-doping.



No organization can guarantee the safety of supplements. Be an informed consumer and recognize "too good to be true" marketing promises.



Research shows that use of **supplements can be a gateway to doping**.



If your child insists on using dietary supplements, **know how to recognize the risks** and reduce the chance of testing positive by seeking professional advice.



Ensure that you and your child understand the principle of **'Strict Liability.'**

FURTHER INFORMATION



For more detailed information about making the best nutrition choices, please consult:

[United States Anti-Doping Agency – Nutrition Guide](#)

[Sport Nutrition for Young Athletes – Canadian Paediatric Society](#)

[Nutrition – Australian Sports Commission](#)

[The Nutrition Source – Harvard](#)

FURTHER INFORMATION



[SA Institute for Drug-Free Sport – Supplements](#)

[U.S. Anti-Doping Agency's Supplement Safety Guide](#)

[Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority – Supplements](#)

[Drug Free Sport New Zealand – Supplements](#)



DOPING RISK FACTORS

Identifying athletes who are more at risk and vulnerable to doping behaviours is important for parents as it allows for proactive action and prevention.

The following personal characteristics, personality traits, and attitudes may make an individual more vulnerable to doping:

- Low self-esteem
- Results / achievement-driven
- Perceived parental pressure to be perfect
- Body image dissatisfaction / concern about weight maintenance
- Type of sport (weight categories, endurance, pure speed or strength)
- Success judged largely by comparison with others rather than on mastery of skills
- Impatience with obtaining results
- Propensity for cheating / bending the rules
- Belief that everyone else is doping
- Disbelief in harmful effects of doping
- History of substance abuse in family
- Admiration for achievements of known doped athletes

PERIODS WHEN ATHLETES ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO DOPING

The following are moments when any athlete may be more at risk of doping:

- Return from injury
- Change in clubs / environment
- Change in level (entering a high performance centre, elite level)
- Recent competitive failure

Career related circumstances

- External pressures to perform / high stakes placed on performance (by sponsors, agents, family members, sports organizations, etc.)
- Overtraining or insufficient recovery time
- Recovering from injury
- Absence or weakness of deterrents (such as doping controls, severe sanctions, etc.)
- Lack of resources (such as competent training professionals, sports training information and technology)

Temporary situations

- Breakdown of personal relationships (with parents, peers, etc.)
- Emotional instability caused by life transitions (puberty, graduation to higher education levels, dropping out of school, geographical moves, severed relationships, death of significant other)
- Upcoming career-determining events (team selection, major competition, scouting or recruitment activities)
- Performance setback or plateau



PREVENTING THE USE OF PERFORMANCE ENHANCING SUBSTANCES

EDUCATE



Be clear with your children and tell them that you expect them to avoid drugs.



Ensure that your child understands that doping is cheating. Maintain ongoing discussions about ethics, proper training, nutrition and hard work.



Explain the health risks of using doping substances.



Identify the signs of doping and steroid abuse.

ADVOCATE



Maintain ongoing discussions about how to improve athletic performance through appropriate levels of training, recovery, and a carefully planned diet.



Encourage and inspire your children to seek their personal best.



Urge coaches to reinforce these messages and maintain a zero-tolerance policy for drugs.

COMMUNICATE



Reassure children and be supportive even when they do not perform well; remind them that these times are valuable opportunities for learning and highlight moments that went well.



Make it clear that you expect your child to avoid the use of performance enhancing substances.



Speak with your child's coach regularly.



Monitor any over-the-counter supplement use and speak to your child about the dangers of these.



FURTHER INFORMATION



Here is a simple reference guide from the WADA website that outlines the health consequences of doping substances:

[The Dangers of Doping – Get the Facts](#)

[Talking to Our Children, Taylor Hooton Foundation, 2016](#)

PROTECTING THE CLEAN ATHLETE - DOPING CONTROL PROCESS



Understand the principle of 'Strict Liability' and ensure that your child is familiar with what constitutes doping.



Ensure that you and your child **understand all 10 anti-doping rule violations** (ADRVs).



Ensure that your child understands that **competitive athletes are tested for doping substances regularly**, in and out of competition, in order to protect clean sport and clean athletes.



Review and discuss information on the stages of doping control together with your child. Consult the WADA website for resources to assist you:

- [At-A-Glance - The Doping Control Process.](#)



Make sure your children know their rights and responsibilities when it comes to the doping control process.

FURTHER INFORMATION



Here is a video that explains each step:
[The Doping Control Process for Athletes.](#)

RECOGNIZING POSSIBLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DRUG USE

Children demonstrating several of the following signs or symptoms may be using performance-enhancing substances.

At-risk behaviours

- Use of other substances, alcohol or tobacco
- Non-discretionary use of dietary supplements
- Relying on untrustworthy or misinformed sources
- Frequenting fitness centres where steroids can be obtained
- Setting unrealistic goals
- Self-medicating
- Engaging in other risk-taking behaviour
- Frequent reading of muscle/fitness magazines

Athletes using anabolic steroids may show one or many of the following:

- Quick weight gain
- Acne
- Hair loss
- Becoming more masculine (for females) such as body hair growth and deepening of voice
- Development of abnormally sized breasts (males)
- Evidence of injections (needle marks)

Athletes using or abusing certain drugs may show one or many of the following:

- Mood swings
- Aggressive behaviour
- Sudden increase in training regime
- Signs of depression
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Quick weight gain or loss



WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS DOPING

Despite your best efforts, children may be exposed to poor influences that could lead them to dope. Denying and ignoring warning signs can lead to disastrous consequences, so it is important to know what to look for and to maintain open communication with your child as much as possible.

If you think your child may be using – react quickly.

INTERVENE



You must intervene to protect your child's well-being.



Get to the truth – seek understanding by speaking with your child about your concerns.



Talk to their doctor.



Seek professional advice about healthy alternatives and proper recovery.



Never give up – you are a vital influence in your child's life.



REFERENCES

Taylor Hooton Foundation. "Talking to Our Children." (2016)

<http://taylorhooton.org>

UK Anti-Doping. "Supporting Your Child's Development." (2016)

<http://www.ukad.org.uk/parents/supporting-your-child>

United States Anti-Doping Agency. "Effects of Performance Enhancing Drugs." (2016)

<http://www.usada.org/substances/effects-of-performance-enhancing-drugs>

United States Anti-Doping Agency. "Supplement 411: Realize, Recognize, Reduce." (2016)

<http://www.usada.org/substances/supplement-411/>

United States Anti-Doping Agency. "True Sport Parent Handbook." (2016)

<http://truesport.org/publications>

FURTHER INFORMATION



[True Sport Parents – USADA](#)

[How Parents Can Help – UKAD](#)

[A Parent's Part in Clean Sport – Drugfree Sport NZ](#)



[A Guide for Sport Parents – Sport Manitoba](#)

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I PLAY FAIR
SAY NO! TO DOPING



Visit our website (www.drugfreesport.org.za) for more information and resources

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