

WADA Announces Meldonium Amnesty

The World Anti-Doping Agency has given a potential lifeline to athletes who have tested positive for the recently-banned drug [Meldonium](#). The anti-doping agency made the decision after admitting it is not sure how long it takes the drug to leave the body.

Presently, studies are being conducted into the [renal elimination of Meldonium](#) and new guidelines have been issued by WADA that could see some athletes cleared.

The World Anti-Doping Agency remarked that Meldonium could be detectable for several months after it had last been ingested based on the preliminary results of those studies. It remarked there is currently a lack of clear scientific information on excretion times in the case of Meldonium. WADA also said athletes could be cleared of blame if the amount of Meldonium detected was less than one microgram per milliliter and while the same applies if the sample was taken before March 1 and the concentration was between one and 15 micrograms.

The substance was added to the banned list at the start of this year and more than 100 sportsmen and women so far have failed tests for it. According to reports, doping samples from 158 athletes from 15 countries have proved positive for Meldonium and at least 31 Russian athletes are suspected of using the banned substance.

Head of the Russian Speed-Skater Union Alexei Kravtsov announced Russian speed skaters Pavel Kulizhnikov and Ekaterina Konstantinova and short-track speed skater Semion Elistratov may be amnestied by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Kravtsov remarked the concentration of Meldonium in the doping samples of the skaters was significantly less than the acceptable amount of one microgram that the World Anti-Doping Agency made public on April 13. Benefits of the amnesty could also be reaped by four-time swimming world champion Yulia Yefimova and volleyball player Alexander Markin. The amount of Meldonium in their doping samples is also less than the threshold level.

Tennis star Maria Sharapova was the highest-profile athlete to have tested positive for Meldonium. However, it is not clear whether this new guidance could possibly save her

and help her case given she admitted not knowing Meldonium had become a banned substance. The Russian professional tennis player is presently serving a provisional suspension after she tested positive at the Australian Open in January. Among other athletes, Swedish runner Abeba Aregawi, Russian swimmer Yuliya Efimova, and Russian Olympic speed-skating champion [Semion Elistratov](#) are some of the other athletes to have failed tests.

In a statement, the Russian Sports Ministry gave its reaction and said the Russian Sports Ministry supports and welcomes the decision made by WADA because it has showed a willingness to understand the situation, rather than stick to the rulebook. The statement further reads they were ready to study how long it would take for Meldonium to be eliminated from the body of an athlete and added the World Anti-Doping Agency has sent recommendations to all the anti-doping organizations, which will allow them to make fair decisions based on the actual guilt of an athlete. The Russian Sports Ministry statement also said WADA has demonstrated impartiality and being objective in the fight against doping in doing so.