

## Sharapova Could End Career After Doping Hearing

Russian Tennis Federation head Shamil Tarpishchev has remarked it is unlikely tennis star Maria Sharapova would get a relief from an International Tennis Federation (ITF) anti-doping hearing in London on Wednesday.

The president of the Russian tennis federation said Maria may not play again after she tested positive for the banned substance [Meldonium](#). Later, Tarpishchev said he only said that she can't play now because no ruling on her case has been issued.

The five-time grand slam champion stunned the world in March when she announced she had returned a positive test for Meldonium, the Latvian-made heart medication that was added to the World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA's) banned list from January 1.

Meldonium is a drug used for treating [ischemia](#) and only distributed in Baltic countries and Russia. Meldonium, which improves exercise capacity in athletes, is not authorized in the rest of Europe and is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use in the United States.

In April this year, WADA admitted there was a lack of scientific certainty on how long Meldonium takes to be completely excreted. It was previously believed that the substance should be out of the system of an athlete within days but WADA now believes it could be present in long-term users, in trace amounts, for weeks, if not months. This finding prompted WADA to issue new guidance that samples collected before 1 March below a certain concentration of Meldonium could be discarded, as the athlete might be able to prove they had stopped taking it in 2015.

WADA's [amnesty to athletes](#) will not help Maria as she had admitted taking it throughout January. Sharapova now needs to convince an International Tennis Federation panel that there were health reasons as also told by her lawyer John Haggerty. The lawyer remarked Maria did use the substance but only on her doctor's advice, throughout January. In March, Haggerty referred Maria should qualify her for a backdated therapeutic use exemption (Tue), or sick note.

Sharapova admitted she had been taking the substance on orders of her doctor for 10 years and had failed to note that it had become a banned substance until hearing of her failed test at the first grand slam of the year. The world's highest-paid sportswoman was provisionally suspended on March 12 pending the hearing. Sharapova has lost a number of her lucrative sponsorship deals and hopes she would be allowed to play again.

The maximum punishment available is four years but it is believed she would get a lenient ban between six and 12 months, which would start from the date of her provisional suspension on 12 March. However, this would mean Maria missing out on the remaining grand slams this season, including Wimbledon, and the Rio Olympics.

The Russian professional tennis player, who is ranked world No. 9 by the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), is one of ten women, and the only Russian, to hold the career Grand Slam. Sharapova's 35 singles titles and five Grand Slam titles include two at the French Open and one each at the Australian Open, Wimbledon, and the US Open.