

Maria Sharapova Suspended for Two Years

In a report issued on Wednesday, the International Tennis Federation has announced five-time [Grand Slam champion Maria Sharapova](#) has been suspended from competition for two years. This was after she failed a drug test at this year's Australian Open for [Meldonium](#) (Mildronate), a drug used to increase blood flow.

Meldonium was banned on January 1, 2016 by the World Anti-Doping Agency. Maria Sharapova claimed she was taking the substance since 2006 and was not aware that the status of the drug had been changed. The ITF said while the violation of the rules by Sharapova was not intentional, but she is the sole author of her misfortune and bears sole responsibility for the contravention, and very significant fault, in failing to take any steps to check whether the continued use of this medicine was permissible.

Sharapova said she will "*immediately appeal*" in a Facebook post. The Russian tennis star said she cannot accept an unfairly harsh two-year suspension and remarked the tribunal, whose members were selected by the ITF, agreed that she did not do anything intentionally wrong, yet they seek to keep me from playing tennis for two years. The five-time Grand Slam champion added she will immediately appeal the suspension portion of this ruling to CAS, the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

In March, Sharapova was provisionally suspended after she announced at a Los Angeles press conference that she had failed a doping test for Meldonium in January. The tennis star however did not mention that she also failed an out-of-competition test for the same drug in February, which was highlighted by the ITF panel's 33-page ruling.

The ruling says the manner of its use, on match days and when undertaking intensive training, is only consistent with an intention to boost her energy levels. The ITF panel also said it may be that she genuinely believed that Mildronate had some general beneficial effect on her health but the manner in which the medication was taken, its concealment from the anti-doping authorities, her failure to disclose it even to her own team, and the lack of any medical justification must inevitably lead to the conclusion that she took Mildronate for the purpose of enhancing her performance. It was further found by the

panel that only her father and her manager, Max Eisenbud of IMG, knew she was taking the drug then.

The ITF panel also discovered that [Maria Sharapova](#) also did not note her use of Mildronate on any of the seven doping control forms she turned in from October 22, 2014, to January 26, 2016. The decision said she must have known that taking a medication before a match, particularly one not currently prescribed by a doctor, was of considerable significance and it was further added this was a deliberate decision, not a mistake. The ITF panel also ruled keeping her Meldonium use from her team and anti-doping authorities constituted a very serious breach of her duty to comply with the rules.

Meanwhile, Russian Tennis Federation president Shamil Tarpishchev has remarked Ekaterina Makarova would take the spot of Maria Sharapova on the country's Summer Games roster.