



# Safeguarding Sporting Futures

The Role of Lifestyle Drug Testing in Early Intervention





Science for a Safer World



## The Pressure Behind the Spotlight

Sudden exposure to fame, wealth and intense expectations, can bring significant challenges especially for young sportspeople. During periods of downtime, they may find themselves in social circles where alcohol and drugs are more readily available, often with a desire to unwind or let off steam. Additionally, younger individuals are naturally more inclined to take risks, which further increases their vulnerability to substance use and related harms.

## Recreational Drug Use in Sport: Gaps and Risks in Anti-Doping Policy

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) primarily focuses on detecting performance-enhancing substances, such as anabolic steroids and  $\beta$ -agonists. Recreational drugs like cannabis, cocaine and MDMA (ecstasy) are not the main target during out-of-competition testing. In fact, WADA's 2021 policy updates introduced more lenient sanctions for recreational substances when detected in-competition (recognising their lack of performance-enhancing intent).

Most recreational drugs have short detection windows: cocaine is approx. 2-4 days in urine, whilst MDMA (ecstasy) is approx. 1-3 days. This means that if athletes are informed of an upcoming

test, abstinence for just a few days could yield a clean result. Blood tests often have even shorter detection windows compared to urine.

As a result, athletes who use such substances casually or infrequently can often avoid detection particularly if testing is scheduled in advance or not randomised. Abstaining for just a few days may be sufficient to yield a negative test result. This makes out-of-competition testing an ineffective deterrent for occasional recreational drug use unless surprise or random testing is implemented consistently.

The concern, however, goes beyond detection. Recreational use, even when perceived as harmless or social, carries real risks. What begins as occasional use can escalate quickly, increasing the risk of psychological dependence. As frequency and tolerance grow, self-control may diminish. By the time signs of misuse become visible - such as changes in behaviour, performance or appearance, significant damage may already have occurred to both the athlete's health and career.

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## Why Early Intervention Matters

Early detection of recreational drug use is essential. Lifestyle drug testing, when paired with guidance and education, helps prevent issues before they have a chance to escalate. Athletes at risk can be guided towards appropriate help before serious consequences emerge. It offers reassurance to athletes, families, coaches, and organisations - supporting healthy decisions and long-term well-being.

Lifestyle drug testing involves the analysis of hair, as hair can retain a long-term record of drug use. Unlike blood or

urine, hair samples can reveal drug consumption weeks or even months after use. Therefore, even temporary abstinence is unlikely to hide prior drug use, since the substances remain embedded in the hair.

## Protecting Potential

Without proper support, education and maturity, even the most promising of careers can be derailed. The long-term effects of substance misuse may compromise not just health, but sporting performance and opportunities.

**Proactive Approach** - creating a culture of care where young athletes can thrive both on and off the field.

At LGC Fordham, we advocate a proactive approach through regular lifestyle drug testing which in turn supports early intervention strategies. When combined with ongoing education and guidance, lifestyle drug testing can offer reassurance and help identify issues before they escalate; supporting healthier decision-making and safeguarding well-being.

**Together, let's champion health and potential!**

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## LGC: Heritage, Expertise and Proven Performance

### Heritage

LGC Fordham's expertise traces back to the lab's original purpose - supporting drug surveillance programmes for British Horseracing since 1963. While technology has advanced, the foundation remains unchanged: scientific excellence, trust and experience. Many of our team members have been with the organisation for 20–30 years, contributing deep knowledge in drug detection, new substance identification and cutting-edge analytical techniques.

### Built on Expertise. Powered by Innovation

Established in 2015, Human Drug Testing (HDT) provides ISO/IEC 17025-accredited testing for drugs of abuse in human urine. In 2016, we expanded our services to include hair testing, also accredited, with capabilities extending to the detection of new psychoactive substances.

Beyond our standard testing services, we offer intelligence-led, adaptive surveillance approaches that enable a rapid and effective response to emerging drug-related threats.

Whether you're looking for reliable routine testing or proactive detection solutions, HDT delivers high-quality, responsive services tailored to meet your specific needs.

### Hair Testing – How it Works

As hair grows, drugs circulating in the bloodstream become incorporated into the hair's structure. These drugs (and metabolites) remain bound to the hair, creating a lasting record of drug use. Because of this, hair testing can reveal both the presence and pattern of drug use, based on the length of hair sampled.

Unlike other methods, temporary abstinence will not affect results, making hair testing a highly effective tool in detecting consistent or historic drug use.

Body hair can also be used when scalp hair is unavailable (note: pattern of use cannot be determined).

Urine testing is available as an alternative if no hair samples can be collected (but with no information of historic usage).



## What Can Be Detected?

LGC Fordham tests for all major classes of recreational drugs, including:

- Amphetamines
- Barbiturates
- Cannabis
- Cocaine
- Benzodiazepines
- Z-drugs
- LSD
- Opiates/Opioids (e.g. morphine, fentanyl, tramadol)
- Alcohol (chronic abuse)

This panel covers recreational drugs that are not covered by WADA out-of-competition testing.

Hair samples undergo an initial screening analysis, followed if necessary by confirmatory analysis using validated methods. The screening process determines the presence or absence of drugs and their metabolites. Any sample that yields a presumptive positive result is subjected to confirmatory analysis to ensure that all reported positive findings are accurate and scientifically defensible. This rigorous two-step process supports fair and informed decision-making.

Additionally, hair can be segmented and analysed in monthly intervals (depending on hair length), providing a more detailed timeline of drug use history when required.

## Easy Sample Collection

We provide tamper-evident hair collection kits with clear, step-by-step instructions. Paperwork is easy to complete and includes consent documentation. LGC can also provide training for collectors, if required. Samples can be stored and transported at ambient temperature using standard postal services

## Intelligence-Led Testing Programmes

LGC can also offer anonymised intelligence-led programmes whereby samples are tested for the presence of a wider range of drug classes. LGC maintains a comprehensive and regularly updated database of recreational drugs and related substances, incorporating intelligence gathered through global forensic early warning networks. Routine testing regimes can then be adjusted/modified as a result to ensure that testing remains fit-for-purpose, reflects current drug trends and keeps pace with emerging drug threats.

**LGC maintains a comprehensive and regularly updated database of recreational drugs.**







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## Get in touch

To discuss your testing requirements, or learn more about testing requirements and pricing, please contact LGC (Fordham):

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