

When two, similarly-named and effective solutions for a sniffle can get you a ban – or not

Recently one of our lifters asked us about the status of a prescribed nasal-spray called *Nasobec*. He'd determined that the active ingredient is a chemical called *beclometasone dipropionate* and being careful, checked the WADA banned-substances list for chemical. Although he found nothing to cause alarm, he later found out that *beclometasone dipropionate* is in a class of chemicals known as *glucocorticoids*. Moreover, he then learned that the WADA list states that "All glucocorticoids are prohibited when administered by oral, intravenous, intramuscular or rectal routes"

At this point, he contacted us and after putting his mind at rest, we thought that it was a good time to echo the advice that both WADA and UK Anti-doping (UKAD) provides us – especially as we are in the tail end of the hay-fever season and approaching the start of the the time of year for colds.

Hay-fever and over-the-counter remedies

Firstly, I apologise for publicising this a bit late in the day for those who have yet to see it, as UKAD published some information on hay-fever remedies. In simple terms, the permitted hay-fever medications and their active ingredients are:

1. Antihistamine tablets (acrivastine, cetirizine, fexofenadine, loratadine)
2. Eye drops (sodium cromoglicate)
3. Nasal sprays and drops
 - Glucocorticoid nasal sprays (beclometasone, betamethasone, budesonide, fluticasone)
 - Antihistamine nasal spray (azelastine)
 - Nasal drops (xylometazoline)

Moreover, the hay-fever medications prohibited in competition are:

4. **Intramuscular triamcinolone injections** – refer to the UKAD hay fever guidelines
5. **Prednisolone tablets** – requires a Therapeutic Use Exemption, contact UKAD
6. **Decongestant** tablets containing **pseudoephedrine (PSE)** – refer to the Prohibited List Q&A section of the WADA website

The webpage with all the information is available at: <https://www.ukad.org.uk/news/article/hay-fever-medications-which-are-permitted/>

And most importantly, UKAD always advises sports-people to check the active ingredients on any prescription or over-the-counter medicines on the Global Drug Reference Online (Global DRO) website. This is very pertinent when dealing with decongestants for colds and hay-fever, because an accidental and innocent choice could result in at least a one-year ban, and a four-year suspension at worst. This could easily happen, for example, with variations of Sudafed, a popular remedy for blocked noses.

Being careful about Sudafed

Sudafed is a popular brand of remedy for blocked noses because many people report that their products work, whilst there is plenty of scientific evidence to back this up. However, the manufacturer typically uses one of two active ingredients, which are *pseudoephedrine* or *phenylephrine*. When looking up these chemicals on the Global DRO (at <https://www.globaldro.com/UK/search>), phenylephrine gets the all-clear at all times, whereas *pseudoephedrine* gets a red-card if detected during competition.

Brand Status
SUDAFED PLUS

Overall Status

Route of Administration	In Competition	Out of Competition
Route Independent *	✘ Prohibited	✔ Not Prohibited

* The intravenous (IV) infusion and/or injection of more than 100mL per 12 hour period of any substance is a prohibited method, even if the substance itself is not prohibited, unless it is received while being treated at the hospital, during surgery, or during clinical diagnostic investigations. [Read More.](#)

Additional Information ⓘ

⚠ Pseudoephedrine is prohibited when the urinary concentration exceeds 150 microgram/mL. Further information can be found from WADA :
https://www.wada-ama.org/sites/default/files/resources/files/WADA_Additional_Info_Pseudoephedrine_2010_EN.pdf
 This threshold is not valid if you are using any substances in the category of diuretics and masking agents. In this case, you must have a Therapeutic Use Exemption for both the diuretic/masking agent and pseudoephedrine.

So does this mean that it is okay to take decongestants with pseudoephedrine up to the day before a competition? In short, this is very risky because the drug has a half-life of up to almost one day, i.e. it would take up to a day for some of us to eliminate half our intake of pseudoephedrine. In real terms, this means that a lifter could take stop taking pseudoephedrine a few days before a competition and still test positive. I use both products if I need to, but being risk-averse, if I need a decongestant within a month of a competition, I'll choose one containing phenylephrine.

Pseudoephedrine is a stronger decongestant, but it can also be a stimulant, not to mention some health risks when taken in abnormally high doses – hence its inclusion on the WADA list. Which brings us to a final word of caution, which is to always find out the active ingredients of any medications, and then check them on the Global DRO. This is even more important with Sudafed capsules sold in a blue box, which are either sold as *Sudafed Blocked Nose*, or *Sudafed Decongestant* – the first contains phenylephrine whilst the second contains pseudoephedrine – but the boxes look very similar. So if you use Sudafed or any other brand of decongestant, choose the right one at the right time to avoid the chances of a positive test.

