

International Regulation of Cannabis

International Laws

Below is a summary of the legality of cannabis in select countries that may be frequented by athletic trainers. This is a sampling of countries and one should always look up the laws of each country, state, and/or region for the most current information to include, but not limited to, prescription, possession, consumption, cultivation, and travel regulations. This is especially important since rules and regulations surrounding cannabis change frequently. This page will be updated as well as information becomes available. See "Travel with Cannabis" document for further guidance on traveling across state and country borders.

Canada

Legal: All forms of cannabis are legal. When you are travelling within Canada, if you meet the minimum age requirement of the province or territory you are in, you may possess up to 30 grams of dried cannabis or the equivalent.

Illegal: It is illegal to take cannabis across the Canadian border, whether you are entering or leaving the country. You could be charged with a criminal offense if you try to travel to other countries with any amount of cannabis in your possession. This includes edible cannabis, cannabis topicals and cannabis extracts, as well as products containing CBD. This applies to all countries, whether cannabis is legal there or not.

Mexico

Legal: Legal for possession, consumption, and cultivation with a permit, but not for sale. On June 28, 2021, the Supreme Court voted 8-3 to decriminalize adult use marijuana completely under Mexican law.

United Kingdom

Legal: Limited medical use has been legal since November 1st, 2018. Cannabis-derived medicines are only legal when prescribed by a specialist consultant and GPs are not allowed to prescribe cannabis-derived medicines. NHS guidance states that medical cannabis should only be prescribed when there is clear published evidence of its benefit and other treatment options have been exhausted

Illegal: Recreational use is prohibited. A cannabis warning or an on-the-spot fine ("Penalty Notice for Disorder") may be issued for simple possession instead of prosecution.

Germany

In 2017, Germany re-allowed medical cannabis. After the 2021 German federal election, the new government announced in their coalition agreement that they intend to legalize cannabis for all purposes (including recreational), although concrete legislation to this effect has not yet been introduced.

Compliance Rules, Organizational Policies, & Drug Testing

World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

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Marijuana is prohibited in-competition by the WADA, and this status applies to all athletes regardless of the state or country laws where they live. All natural and synthetic cannabinoids are prohibited In-Competition except for Cannabidiol. THC is the only cannabinoid for which there is a urinary threshold, and it is set at 150 ng/mL. There are no threshold limits for any other cannabinoid (natural or synthetic).

The Olympics

The Olympics follows the World Anti-Doping Agency's drug use policy, which bans marijuana use during competition season but is not testing athletes during the offseason.

United States Anti-Doping Association (USADA)

The USADA will consider a TUE application for medical marijuana for therapeutic use per the WADA TUE Physician Guidelines for Neuropathic Pain. All TUEs for cannabis or other FDA-approved cannabinoid medications (e.g., Marinol, dronabinol) must meet the criteria set forth in the International Standard for TUEs in order to be approved.

NCAA

At its Feb. 22-23 meeting, the Committee on Competitive Safeguards and Medical Aspects of Sports increased the THC threshold and recommended a reconfiguration of the penalty structure for student-athletes who test positive for THC.

CSMAS aligned with THC threshold levels established by the World Anti-Doping Agency, raising the threshold for student-athletes from 35 to 150 nanograms per milliliter. For the cannabinoid class to be removed from the NCAA list of banned drugs, each of the three NCAA divisional governance bodies would have to introduce and adopt legislation.

MLB

Effective 2020 the MLB and MLBPA announced the removal of natural cannabinoids (e.g., tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), cannabidiol (CBD) and marijuana) from the list of prohibited Drugs of Abuse. The [Cannabis Use Policy](#) summarizes additional rules and regulations that will apply to all players and Club personnel. Players can still be punished for marijuana use if they appear under the influence during games, practice, meetings, workouts or any other circumstances during "the scope of their employment."

NBA

The National Basketball Association (NBA) and its players union have officially signed a [collective bargaining agreement](#) that removes marijuana from the league's banned substances list and lays out rules allowing players to invest in and promote cannabis brands—with certain exceptions.

If an NBA team has reasonable cause to believe that the player was under the influence of marijuana and/or alcohol while engaged in activities for such Team or for the NBA, or that the player has a dependency or other related issue involving the use of marijuana and/or alcohol, the Team may refer the player to the Medical Director for a mandatory evaluation. Players who fail to comply with a mandatory alcohol or marijuana treatment program would also face disciplinary action, including a \$5,000 fine per day of non-compliance.

NFL

Cannabis was removed from the NFL List of Prohibited Substances in 2020. The pain management committee of the NFL and the NFL Players Association have provided \$1 million in funding for research related to the investigation of alternatives to opiates for pain management, as well as the impact of cannabis or cannabinoids on athletic performance in elite football players.

The NFL's collective bargaining agreement for the 2020-2021 season changed the league's policy on marijuana, by not testing players during the offseason but still restricting use during the game season. The CBA also raised the threshold for a positive marijuana test from 35 nanograms to 150 and removed suspensions for positive tests of any drug in favor of fines. The league previously tested 10 players from each team every week during the season, with six positive tests resulting in a year-long suspension.

Thresholds: Delta 9-THC-carboxylic acid (marijuana) ≥ 150 ng/mL [≥ 35 -149 ng/mL in Stage Two for clinical purposes only] Synthetic Cannabinoids ≥ 2.5 ng/mL

NHL

The NHL doesn't classify marijuana as a banned substance and players are not punished for positive tests. If "abnormally high levels" are detected during a player's urine test, they're offered admission—to which they can decline—in the league's Substance Abuse and Behavioral Health. While CBD and other phytocannabinoids of emerging popularity and visibility are not prohibited or considered drugs of abuse, the League cautions players from using substances without first ensuring purity as many are of unknown origin.

NFHS

No mention of cannabis in the NFHS position statement on appearance and performance enhancing drugs and substances. State high school associations dictate rules and policies on the use and testing student-athletes.

Sources Used to Derive This Information

Canada Laws - <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/health/campaigns/cannabis/border.html>

TSA - <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/whatcanibring/items/medical-marijuana>

WADA Prohibited Status of Cannabis– <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/content/what-is-prohibited/prohibited-in-competition/cannabinoids>

WADA Cannabidoid Q&A - <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/questions-answers/cannabinoid>

WADA TUE Checklist for Neuropathic Pain - <https://www.wada-ama.org/en/resources/therapeutic-use-exemption-tue/checklist-for-therapeutic-use-exemption-tue-application-8>

USADA - <https://www.usada.org/athletes/substances/marijuana-faq/>

NCAA Banned List - https://ncaaorg.s3.amazonaws.com/ssi/substance/2021-22NCAA_BannedSubstances.pdf

MLB POLICY GOVERNING THE USE, POSSESSION AND DISTRIBUTION OF NATURAL CANNABINOID BY PLAYERS AND CLUB PERSONNEL - <https://img.mlbstatic.com/mlb-images/image/upload/mlb/vctw0ozyqgngoy1r2ti5.pdf>

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL’S JOINT DRUG PREVENTION AND TREATMENT PROGRAM- <https://img.mlbstatic.com/mlb-images/image/upload/mlb/xbrwtupwdmphz1lq3ox6.pdf>

NFL <https://nflpa.com/active-players/drug-policies>

NFL Research Grant - <https://www.nfl.com/playerhealthandsafety/health-and-wellness/medical-research/nfl-nflpa-pain-management-committee-accepting-applications-for-1-million-in-rese>

NHL Drug Testing Policy https://www.espn.com/nhl/story/_/id/26046596/is-nhl-future-marijuana-pro-sports-why-be

2023 NBA Collective Bargaining Agreement: <https://ak-static.cms.nba.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2023/06/2023-NBA-Collective-Bargaining-Agreement.pdf>

Additional Useful Resources

Map of World Cannabis Laws - <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map-of-world-cannabis-laws.svg>

GlobaDro – <https://www.globaldro.com/Home>

TADP - <https://antidoping.itftennis.com/news/305710.aspx>

NFHS Position Statement: https://www.nfhs.org/media/1018447/nfhs_position_statement_apeds_april_2017.pdf

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