CELLULAR HEALTH

Peptides and Tested Athletes: What the WADA Prohibited List and USADA Say, and Why Coaches Refer Instead of Advise

LetsGo Editorial · LetsGo Editorial · 8 November 2026 · 7 min read

Short answer: Many peptides marketed for "recovery" or "healing" are banned in tested sport. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) publishes the Prohibited List, and USADA applies it to US athletes in Olympic, Paralympic and many national programmes. USADA says BPC-157 falls under WADA's S0 "non-approved substances" category and is prohibited at all times. A change in US compounding policy does not change sport rules. Coaches who work with tested athletes should not advise on peptides at all. They point the athlete to USADA's resources, the team physician and the athlete's own clinician.

This national guide is education only, not medical or legal advice, and not anti-doping advice for any individual athlete.

Who counts as a "tested athlete"?

It is broader than many coaches think. It includes Olympic and Paralympic hopefuls, national-team members, many college athletes, some professional leagues with their own testing rules, and masters athletes who enter events that follow the World Anti-Doping Code. A recreational runner in a local 10K is usually not tested, but a masters cyclist at a national championship may be. If a client competes, ask early whether they are subject to testing, and under whose rules.

The WADA Prohibited List in plain words

WADA updates the [Prohibited List](https://www.wada-ama.org/en/prohibited-list) at least once a year. It groups substances and methods into categories. Two matter most for peptide adverts: - **S0, non-approved substances.** Any pharmacological substance not approved by any government health authority for human therapeutic use is prohibited at all times. Many "research" peptides sit here. - **S2, peptide hormones, growth factors, related substances and mimetics.** This covers a wide group of substances that affect growth hormone, red blood cells and tissue growth. The list also covers methods, not just substances. Coaches do not need to memorise it. They need to know it exists, that it changes, and that the athlete is responsible for what is in their body.

What USADA says about BPC-157

USADA has published an athlete education article on [BPC-157](https://www.usada.org/spirit-of-sport/education/bpc-157-peptide-prohibited/). It says BPC-157 is prohibited under S0, is not approved by FDA for human use, has no human clinical trials establishing its effectiveness, and that an athlete is unlikely to receive a Therapeutic Use Exemption for it. The article also states a view on compounding that was written before the October 2026 federal notice below. Treat the sport-rule part as the key point for athletes: in tested sport, BPC-157 is prohibited.

What the October 2026 federal notice does and does not change

[Federal Register doc 2026-22192](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/10/30/2026-22192/enforcement-discretion-policy-regarding-5 was filed **28 Oct 2026** and published **30 Oct 2026**. It is **interim 503A compounding enforcement discretion** for six peptides: BPC-157, TB-500, Epitalon, Semax, KPV and MOTS-c. It is **NOT FDA approval** and **NOT the final bulks list**. For athletes, the practical point is simple. US compounding policy and sport anti-doping rules are separate systems. A policy about when FDA may not take action against certain pharmacy compounding does not make a substance permitted in sport, and does not make it approved for human therapeutic use. Coaches should not tell an athlete that a peptide is "now legal" or "now allowed".

Tools athletes can use themselves

- **[USADA substances resources](https://www.usada.org/athletes/substances/).** Guidance on medicines, supplements and prohibited substances. - **[Global DRO](https://www.globaldro.com/).** A lookup for the status of specific medicines in sport. It covers medicines, not supplements or unapproved products. - **[Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs)](https://www.usada.org/athletes/tue/).** The process for an athlete who has a genuine medical need for a prohibited medicine. A TUE is decided by the anti-doping organisation, with the athlete's physician. A coach can show an athlete where these tools are. The athlete and their physician use them, not the coach.

Why "recovery peptides" are a particular risk

Products sold online as "research use only" or "not for human consumption" may be mislabelled, contaminated or contain a different substance from the label. For an athlete, that can mean a positive test as well as a health risk. FDA's [health fraud page](https://www.fda.gov/consumers/health-fraud-scams) explains common warning signs. Supplements can also be contaminated with prohibited substances, which is why anti-doping bodies urge caution.

What a coach can do

- Ask at intake whether the client is a tested athlete, and note it. - Share the USADA and Global DRO links when peptides, supplements or medicines come up. - Keep coaching focused on training load, sleep, food, hydration and stress, which affect recovery and are in scope. - Refer injury questions to a sports medicine physician or physiotherapist. - Write a short note after any peptide conversation: what was asked, what you said, and where you referred.

What a coach must never do

- Recommend, source, sell or dose any peptide, "research chemical" or compounded product. - Tell an athlete a substance is safe, legal or permitted in sport. - Help an athlete hide use, time use around testing or avoid testing. - Present FR 2026-22192 as permission or a product endorsement.

A referral script that works

"I can't advise on peptides, and for tested athletes many are prohibited. Please check with USADA's resources and your team physician before you take anything. I'm happy to work on your sleep, training load and food in the meantime." Adapt the wording to your own style, but keep the three parts: I don't advise, here is where to check, here is what we can work on.

Common questions

- *"My physio said BPC-157 might help my tendon. Can I try it?"* "For a tested athlete, USADA says it's prohibited. Please talk to your team physician and check USADA's guidance." - *"The government just allowed it, right?"* "The federal notice is about pharmacy compounding enforcement. It isn't FDA approval and it doesn't change sport rules." - *"I'm a masters athlete. Does this apply to me?"* "It depends on the events you enter. Check the event's anti-doping rules and USADA's resources." - *"Can I get a TUE?"* "That's a decision for the anti-doping organisation, with your doctor. USADA explains the process."

Approved medicines are different, but still need checking

Some peptide-based medicines are FDA-approved for specific conditions and listed in [Drugs@FDA](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf/). Approval for medical use does not automatically mean a medicine is permitted in sport. An athlete prescribed any medicine should check its status with Global DRO and their physician, and ask about a TUE if needed.

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Start free with [Level 1](/academy). [Level 3 (US$300)](/academy/level-3/evidence-quality-for-coaches) covers how to read evidence. Level 4 (US$500) covers the [HHS 503A peptide policy](/academy/level-4/hhs-503a-peptide-policy) and [peptide referral scripts](/academy/level-4/peptide-referral-scripts). Level 5 (US$500) covers case work, including grey-market requests. Already coaching? Create your profile at /coach. Scope reference: [NBHWC scope of practice](https://nbhwc.org/scope-of-practice/). We do not promise income or client results. *Education only. Not medical advice. LetsGo Academy is not a licence to practise.*

Safety note

If you have a medical condition, are pregnant, or take prescription medicines, check with your own doctor before booking heat, cold, cryotherapy, hyperbaric, or float sessions.

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