

CANNABIS IN SPORT

EDUCATION KIT

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Mission

Making sport better

The way in which the CCES does this is to:
Activate a values-based and principle-driven sport system;
Advocate for sport that is fair, safe and open; and
Protect the integrity of sport.

Vision

Sport in Canada that is fair, safe and open to everyone.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) is certified to the ISO 9001:2008 Quality Management Standard, demonstrating that the CCES meets the needs of its stakeholders and all necessary regulatory requirements.

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Introduction

With the legalization of cannabis in Canada anticipated as early as summer 2018, there is a path to implementation forming. Provincial and territorial plans for oversight, licensing, sales, and distribution are beginning to create a patchwork of legislation across this country.

In the face of mounting complexity, it is important to remember that in the world of anti-doping, the debate is not complicated. **In sport, cannabis is prohibited.**

Even within this simple fact, however, there are questions. How much is prohibited? What about cannabinoid derivatives? What if I need it as medicine? Why is it still prohibited? These are legitimate and important questions that athletes, their support personnel, and their families have. It is incumbent on us, those in the sport community, to answer those questions and to promote not just the conclusion – that cannabis is prohibited – but also a deeper understanding of the *whys* and the *hows*.

The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES), both as Canada's anti-doping agency and the steward of True Sport in Canada, wants to enable you to answer those questions. To that end, this kit contains materials for our partners in sport, to do just that – to provide clear information on this topic to your athletes, your students, your faculty and staff, and your coaches. It is designed to help protect them from inadvertent doping violations, to encourage learning, and to optimize their opportunities for success.

This kit provides materials for your website, language to use in training or professional development, resources for further study, and guidance for getting the message out on social media.

We encourage you to seek out more information on our website and to inquire about cannabis in sport at substances@cces.ca.

The CCES thanks you for your partnership in this endeavour.

cces.ca/cannabis

How to Use This Kit

Below you will find a brief description of each of the resources found in this kit, as well as some suggestions about what audiences it applies to, how to apply it to different contexts and scenarios, and some different ways to extend the usefulness of the content.

You can keep the content as is, or get creative with it. As long as the message remains the same, you can tailor it to suit your specific needs. Once your message is out there, please let us know so we can boost your signal and encourage others to follow your good example. Use the hashtag #cannabisinsport to join the conversation!

Cannabis in Sport Key Messages

If you do choose to adapt and alter the content in this kit, the key messages are a great way to check your work and ensure that we're all pulling in the same direction. Please refer back to them as you share the other resources.

Cannabis in Sport FAQ

The FAQ answers 13 common questions about cannabis in sport. From its status on the Prohibited List to medical exemptions and more, it is a ready-to-go piece of content that can be used in a number of places and in a number of ways. For example:

- Post to your website – it includes many live links to additional resources;
- Use in whole or in part of an athlete contract;
- Circulate as part of training for coaches;
- Use as social media content, either as text or incorporated into images; and
- Break it out by question as individual slides for public display screens in gyms, physical education centres, athletic offices, common areas in clubhouses, etc.

Cannabis in Sport Slide Deck

Will you be in front of groups of athletes, coaches, and support personnel, training or offering professional development? Here is a tool to help deliver this message to the people in your trust. When we all deliver the same message about cannabis, we protect our athletes from the detrimental effects of drugs and a positive test.

The slide deck has been provided without a theme applied. Feel free to apply your own PowerPoint theme. Here are some ways you can utilize these materials:

- Use the slide deck and speaking notes to deliver a cannabis-specific presentation to your athletes;
- Incorporate the slides and speaking notes into professional development with your faculty and staff, coaches, trainers, and physicians;
- Use the deck to articulate the messages in parent outreach; and
- Use the slides or a subset of slides in another presentation or training session you're already planning.

Cannabis in Sport Quiz

The Cannabis in Sport Quiz is a five-question primer on cannabis in sport, and the content can be used several ways, such as:

- A written assessment in a classroom environment, used as a precursor to more discussion;
- An oral tool during a training session or information session;
- Adapted as image macros for Facebook and Instagram;
- Adapted as Twitter polls;
- Used as short-form content on public display screens in gyms, physical education centres, athletic offices, common areas in clubhouses, etc.

CCES Cannabis in Sport Web Page

In addition to this kit, the CCES has published a web page at cces.ca/cannabis. The page includes the Cannabis Quiz as an interactive tool, the Cannabis in Sport FAQ, more information about medical cannabis (including the Medical Exemption Wizard), a collection of Media Releases and Advisory Notes related to cannabis in sport, additional references and resources (including media, Health Canada documentation, research, and the history of its prohibition in sport), and contact information for the CCES. While it is a resource in and of itself, it can be used in other ways as well:

- Reference for students doing research;
- Have athletes or students in a workshop or presentation take the interactive quiz on their phones and then compare scores and answers;
- Create a [WebQuest](#)-style activity for students using the content on/linked to from this page;
- Provide to parents via email as part of a communications or engagement plan; or
- Linked to from your own homepage, athlete services webpage, social media, or resources as part of your own education and information program.

For more examples and to see how we use the material, follow us online:

Facebook facebook.com/CanadianCentreforEthicsinSport/

Twitter twitter.com/ethicsinsport

Instagram instagram.com/ethicsinsport/

For more information, email education@cces.ca.

Key Messages

However you decide to promote and utilize the resources and content in this kit, it is critical that we present a unified message to the sport community at large. As you promote the content to your audiences, please keep in mind the following key messages:

Cannabis is prohibited in sport, no matter its legal status in Canada.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)'s Prohibited List is an international document and is not affected by changes in Canadian law. Cannabis is just one of many substances which are legal in Canada, yet prohibited in sport.

Cannabis may have therapeutic uses, but any medical use needs to be justified with a medical file and a medical exemption.

Athletes must apply for medical exemptions if they intend to use a prohibited medication, and their use of the medication must be medically justified.

The only way to be 100% sure to avoid a doping violation for cannabis is through abstinence.

This is no different than any other prohibited recreational drug or medication.

Any use of cannabis is at the athlete's own risk.

While there are ways to minimize risk, athletes must understand that they are liable for anything that appears in their urine or blood sample.

The threshold is not a shield.

WADA requires that labs do not report and anti-doping organizations not pursue action against low concentrations of cannabis in an athlete's sample; however, even with this threshold in place, there continue to be many in-competition violations for cannabis each year.

Cannabis in Sport FAQ

The Government of Canada plans to legalize cannabis as early as summer 2018. Athletes subject to the Canadian Anti-Doping Program (CADP) must be aware that this does not affect the status of cannabis in sport. Cannabis continues to be a prohibited substance and a positive test can still result in a sanction.

What will be the status of cannabis following legalization?

Cannabis will continue to be listed as **Prohibited In Competition** on the [World Anti-Doping Agency](#) (WADA)'s [Prohibited List](#). This can be verified via the [Global DRO](#).

If it's legal in Canada, why is it still prohibited in sport?

The CADP adheres to WADA's Prohibited List, which is an international standard under the World Anti-Doping Code. Despite Canada's position on cannabis, the global anti-doping community has maintained cannabis on the Prohibited List.

Why are cannabinoids prohibited?

All prohibited substances are added to the Prohibited List because they meet two of the three following criteria:

- Use of the substance has the potential to enhance performance;
- Use of the substance can cause harm to the health of the athlete; and
- Use of the substance violates the spirit of sport.

While the CCES does not view cannabis as particularly performance enhancing, we do have anecdotal accounts of athletes using it therapeutically with the *intent* to improve performance or recovery by managing pain, stress, or anxiety.

While cannabis has therapeutic uses, habitual use or abuse presents the potential for harm, especially for younger athletes. Impairment during competition presents a liability to the safety of the athlete and their competitors.

Finally, given that cannabis is prohibited in **competition**, we encourage athletes to demonstrate respect for their teammates, their opponents, and their sport by competing clean, clear, and sober.

What does cannabis's status as a threshold substance mean?

The threshold means that if cannabinoids are detected in an athlete's sample below a specific concentration, it will not be reported and a violation for presence will not be asserted.

This threshold is not meant to permit frequent, habitual, or in-competition use.

Despite the threshold, positive tests for cannabis are still frequent.

What does this mean for legal recreational use?

Like other prohibited recreational drugs, athletes should use discretion and judgement when deciding whether to use legal cannabis. Athletes will be held strictly liable for any prohibited substance that is found in their sample.

What does this mean for legal medical marijuana?

Athletes should always work with their physicians to explore non-prohibited alternatives to prohibited medications. Where no alternative is available or effective, or a physician determines that cannabis or a cannabis derivative is the most appropriate course of treatment, athletes should apply for a medical exemption. [Refer to the Medical Exemption Wizard to determine your requirements.](#)

Athletes should be aware that there is no guarantee that a medical exemption will be granted.

What about CBD oil?

Cannabidiol (CBD) is a non-psychoactive derivative of cannabis. As of 2018, WADA no longer lists CBD as a prohibited substance. We would like to remind athletes that CBD oil often still contains some concentration of the banned substance tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Therefore, the use of CBD oil is at an athlete's own risk.

How long does it take for THC to clear my system?

There is no simple answer for this. Different strains of cannabis have different concentrations of THC. This means that consuming the same amount of different strains can result in differing doses, and therefore different clearance times and different concentrations shown in a drug test.

THC is fat soluble, which means that it can be stored in the body for a long period of time and released slowly, although not consistently, depending on an individual's metabolism.

Finally, frequency of use is another factor. Regular users will have longer clearance times than casual or infrequent users.

How can athletes minimize the risk of a doping violation?

As with all prohibited substances, athletes can avoid violations by abstaining from cannabis use during their athletic careers.

Aside from abstinence, there is no way to entirely avoid the possibility of a violation; however, athletes may be able to reduce their risk with the following actions:

- Consider medical alternatives to medical marijuana;
- If medical marijuana is a necessary therapy, apply for a medical exemption as necessary;
- Ensure that non-medical consumption is not habitual or abusive;
- Ensure that consumption is outside of a competition period; and
- Ensure that consumption is a minimum of 30 days before the start of a competition period.

Individual clearance times and the concentration of THC may vary, so this approach to preventing an anti-doping rule violation is not a certainty.

Remember, athletes are strictly liable for any prohibited substance found in their sample.

Can the CCES tell me the clearance time of my medical marijuana strain?

No. The CCES cannot provide clearance times for any prohibited substance, including marijuana or cannabis.

What documents are required for a medical exemption for cannabis?

Some of the items required in a medical file for medical marijuana include:

- A comprehensive medical history related to the diagnosis;
- The results of a complete medical evaluation and a detailed letter from the prescribing physician; and
- A completed [Medical Document Authorizing the use of Cannabis for Medical Purposes under the Access to Cannabis for Medical Purposes Regulations](#).

Always consult the [Medical Exemption Wizard](#) on the CCES website when applying for a medical exemption. This will tell you when to apply, who to apply to, and what kind of exemption to apply for.

Where can I find more health information about cannabis?

Additional information can be found on [Health Canada's Consumer Information page about cannabis](#).

I have other questions about cannabis in sport and/or medical exemptions.

For other inquiries related to cannabis' status or other medical inquiries, please refer to cces.ca/cannabis or contact substances@cces.ca.

Slide Deck with Speaking Notes

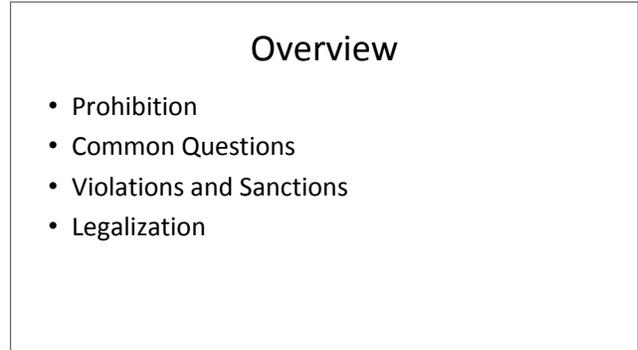
This deck can be downloaded from cces.ca/cannabis.

Slide 1: Title



Cannabis in Sport

Slide 2: Overview



Overview

- Prohibition
- Common Questions
- Violations and Sanctions
- Legalization

- Topics of today's presentation
- Prohibition, including:
 - The history of the prohibition of cannabis in sport
 - Why it's prohibited
 - More information about active substances in cannabis
- Common Questions
 - We'll address some of the more frequent questions that are asked about cannabis
- Violations and Sanctions
 - What happens if you're found with cannabis in your urine or blood sample after doping control
- Legalization
 - What this means for cannabis in sport

Slide 3: History

History

- Cannabinoids have been on the WADA Prohibited List since 2004
- Prohibited List inclusion criteria:
 - The substance must meet two of the following:
 - Has the potential to enhance sport performance
 - Represents an actual or potential health risk to the athlete
 - Violates the spirit of sport
- Discussion: Where does cannabis fall in these criteria?

- Cannabis has been on the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)'s Prohibited List since 2004
- How is a substance added to the prohibited list? It must meet at least two of the following three criteria:
 - The substance has the potential to enhance or enhances sport performance
 - The substance represents an actual or potential health risk to the athlete
 - Use of the substance violates the spirit of sport
- Ask the group: Where does cannabis fall in these criteria?
- The following can be used to prompt discussion and/or confirm discussion. Note that this is not exhaustive – encourage the group to explore the topic
 - It has the potential to enhance, or does enhance, performance – we'll come back to this one on the next slide
 - It represents an actual or potential health risk to the athlete – while it may have fewer health risks than other recreational drugs, it's still not a health food – especially when smoked. Health Canada especially cautions against use under the age of 25
 - It violates the spirit of sport – it's illegal in most markets; if you're under the influence during competition, it demonstrates a lack of respect for opponents, and presents a potential safety risk for you and others

Slide 4: “But it's not performance-enhancing...”

“But it's not performance-enhancing...”

- Common attitude in the sport community
- How might it enhance performance?
- What sports might benefit from cannabis use?
- Intent is important

- Even if the other two criteria (actual or potential health harm, violates spirit of sport) didn't exist, let's talk through the first one
- What might its value be as a performance enhancer?
 - e.g. relaxation, help with recovery (i.e. anti-inflammatory effects), calming effect/anxiety management, pain management, etc.
- Which sports might that help in?
 - e.g. football – pain management; shooting sports – calmed nerves; anxiety management – diving, ski jumping
- Depending on the sport and the usage, it can be – or used with the intent that it will help performance, and athletes have reported doing just this
- If it's used with a therapeutic intent, without being approved for that purpose via an exemption, it's not considered medically justified and will not be permitted

Slide 5: Prohibition in Sport

Prohibition in Sport

- All forms are prohibited
- Banned 'In Competition' only
 - Any traces in the system over the threshold limit during that time is prohibited
- Threshold substance
 - Limit was increased in 2013

- Any form of consumption – any route of administration, as listed in the Global DRO – is prohibited
 - This can include smoking, vaping, edibles, etc.
- Cannabis is banned in-competition only
 - Having even a trace of cannabis (over the threshold limit) in your urine or blood sample during the 'in-competition' period is prohibited. This should be emphasized as many athletes think that consuming the product on game day is the only prohibition
- Cannabis is what we call a threshold substance
 - This means that a sample that contains cannabis below a certain concentration won't be reported as a positive test by the lab
 - The threshold was raised in 2013 to help prevent adverse analytic findings (AAFs) for very low concentrations of cannabis
 - See: Ross Rebagliati, Snowboarder Nagano '98 Winter Olympics – tested positive for a small amount of cannabis and claimed second-hand exposure
- Many people hear that the threshold was raised and think that gives them licence to use cannabis
- They underestimate how low the threshold remains and how easy it is to test positive by using cannabis close to competition

Slide 6: THC and CBD

THC and CBD

- Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC)
 - Psychoactive cannabinoid
 - Prohibited
- Cannabidiol (CBD)
 - Non-psychoactive cannabinoid
 - Not prohibited
 - Still, exercise caution

- There are two main substances in most strains of cannabis, THC and CBD
- THC is the cannabinoid that is banned on the Prohibited List
- On medical products, the concentration of each is listed; on black-market products, concentrations are imprecise and possibly inaccurate
- As of January 1, 2018, WADA has removed cannabidiol (CBD) from the Prohibited List
- This is the substance often promoted as having therapeutic effects, and is often sold as an oil
- That said – even CBD products can still contain traces of THC!
- They should only be used for medically-justified reasons
- If a CBD product is being used because of a prescription, **it should be disclosed during doping control**
- And if a CBD product has a known quantity of THC in it, apply for a medical exemption

Slide 7: Common Questions

Common Questions

- **What are the clearance times?**
 - Inconsistent retention and clearance times
 - Depends on the individual
- **Can I use it for medical purposes?**
 - Self-medication ≠ medically-justified usage
 - Medical use: CCES has a medical exemption process.

Common question from the sport community:

- What is the clearance time?
 - Marijuana is fat-soluble and has inconsistent retention and clearance times depending on the balance of THC/CBD in the strain, the amount smoked, and the individual's own physiology.
We can't predict clearance times or predict the amount that will appear in a sample following use
 - Bottom line: We don't know. We cannot give exact clearance times or predict the amount that will appear in a sample following use
- Medical use or self-medication?
 - What is the difference between the two? Medical use is done under advisement from a doctor and with a prescription; self-medication can be therapeutic in intent but is not done with a doctor's advisement
 - Medical exemptions do exist; however, criteria for the legitimate use of medical marijuana are VERY strict
 - Bottom line: No, not without a medical exemption

Slide 8: Common Questions, continued

Common Questions

- **How do I avoid ever having a positive test?**
 - Don't use it.
- **Is that the only way?**
 - Yes.

- This is a fairly common question too
- So let's say you do use cannabis by smoking, vaping, as edibles, whatever... How do you avoid testing positive?
 - Well, you don't. There's no way to be sure, unless your use was a really long time before the test occurs. Again, we don't know what the timeline might be for a given individual.
- So the only way to 100% avoid a positive test is by not using.

Slide 9: Risk Minimization

Risk Minimization

- Consider alternatives to medical marijuana
- If medical marijuana is a necessary therapy, apply for a medical exemption
- Ensure that non-medical consumption is not habitual or abusive
- Ensure that consumption is outside of a competition period
- Ensure that consumption is a minimum of 30 days before the start of a competition period.

- That said, we can do some things to minimize risk
- First thing that needs to be said: **It is at your own risk if you, as an athlete, choose to use cannabis**
- If you use cannabis for therapeutic purposes, talk to your doctor about non-prohibited alternatives
- If it's the only treatment that works for a diagnosed ailment, then apply for a medical exemption
- If you're using it recreationally, make sure that you're using it in a way that isn't habitual or abusive
- Avoid consuming cannabis in a competition period. This doesn't just mean on the day of the event – competition periods vary
- If you're an athlete who's subject to testing and you're still committed to using cannabis, ensure that consumption is a minimum of 30 days before the start of a competition period
- This is not a recipe to prevent a positive test. It is not 100% unless you stop using entirely long enough in advance while subject to testing, or are using it with a medical exemption

Slide 10: Cannabis – Violations and Sanctions

Cannabis - Violations & Sanctions

- Potential sanctions:
 - Ranges from a warning to a 4-year ban
 - Awards, records can be stripped no matter the sanction
 - Even if the sanction is only a warning!

- If a positive test for cannabis is reported, there can be consequences
- Sanction can be as high as a four-year ban from sport if it is determined that the athlete was intentionally using the substance to gain a performance-enhancing benefit
- 2 year sanction with possibility of reduction when it is determined that there was no intent to gain a performance-enhancing benefit
 - The possibility of a reduction is entirely based on specific facts of the case. For example, timing of ingestion, circumstances of the positive test, etc.
 - The bottom line here is not to expect a reduction in the length or severity of a sanction
- No matter the length of the sanction, a positive test for cannabis can result in prizes, award money, records, etc. being stripped

Slide 11: Pending Legalization

Pending Legalization

- **Legalization ≠ End to Prohibition**
 - Bill C-45 – *An act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts*
- WADA is a global organization and does not change the List because of changes to Canadian law.

- Despite impending legalization in Canada, cannabis continues to be prohibited in sport
- The specific legislation is “Bill C-45 - An Act respecting cannabis and to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Criminal Code and other Acts”
 - parl.ca/LegisInfo/BillDetails.aspx?Language=E&billId=8886269
- Important to emphasize: **the legal status in Canada does not affect the status of cannabinoids on the WADA Prohibited List**

Slide 12: Bottom Line...

Bottom Line...

- Cannabis remains prohibited, even when legal
- Athletes remain liable for anything found in their sample, regardless of intent and timing
- The only way to 100% avoid a positive test is abstinence
- If the decision is made to use anyway, take steps to minimize risk
- For legitimate medical use, keep proper documentation, apply for a medical exemption, and declare use on the Doping Control Form

- To conclude: cannabis is still prohibited in-competition in sport even when legal
- In-competition doesn't mean used during competition, it means present in your urine or blood sample when tested in competition
- Athletes are held liable for anything found in their sample
- Avoid cannabis use if possible – abstinence is the only way to be sure to avoid a positive test
- If you choose not to abstain, minimize your risk through the steps we talked about – look for alternatives, reduce your intake if you're a regular user, avoid it entirely in the month leading up to competition
 - *This is a good place to refer athletes to your organization or institution's health and/or substance abuse services*
- If you have a prescription for a cannabis product, collect all of the documentation, apply for an exemption, and declare it if you're tested

Slide 13: More Resources

More Resources

- Cannabis in Sport – cces.ca/cannabis
- Global DRO – globaldro.com
- Medical Exemption Wizard – cces.ca/mewizard
- Questions? Email substances@cces.ca

- You can find more information about cannabis on the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport's website at cces.ca/cannabis
- You can look up any drug's status on the Global DRO website – globaldro.com
- If you're using a prohibited medication, you can find out what you need to do next using the Medical Exemption Wizard – cces.ca/mewizard
- And if you have additional questions about anything we've talked about today you can email substances@cces.ca – the Athlete Services Team at the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport will address your inquiry

Cannabis in Sport Quiz

1. The World Anti-Doping Agency's Prohibited List classifies cannabis as:
 - a. Prohibited at all times
 - b. Prohibited in competition
 - c. Not prohibited
 - d. Prohibited out of competition

2. When cannabis is legalized in a country, province, territory, or state, its status in sport is:
 - a. Changed to "not prohibited"
 - b. Unchanged

3. If you use cannabis out of competition and are then tested in competition soon after, a urine test:
 - a. Will not show the presence of cannabis in the sample
 - b. May show the presence of cannabis in the sample

4. True or false: It is easy to predict how long it takes for cannabis to clear from a particular athlete's body.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. Cannabis is a threshold substance, which means:
 - a. Presence below a certain concentration will not result in a positive test
 - b. It is on the threshold of being taken off the Prohibited List

Cannabis in Sport Quiz – Answer Key and Notes

1. The World Anti-Doping Agency’s Prohibited List classifies cannabis as:
 - a. Prohibited at all times
 - b. Prohibited in competition**
Cannabis is currently listed as prohibited in competition but not prohibited out of competition on the World Anti-Doping Agency’s Prohibited List.
 - c. Not prohibited
 - d. Prohibited out of competition

2. When cannabis is legalized in a country, province, territory, or state, its status in sport is:
 - a. Changed to “not prohibited”
 - b. Unchanged**
Irrespective of whether cannabis is legal or not in your country, it is still prohibited in sport internationally, per WADA’s Prohibited List.

3. If you use cannabis out of competition and are then tested in competition soon after, a urine test:
 - a. Will not show the presence of cannabis in the sample
 - b. May show the presence of cannabis in the sample**
Using cannabis out of competition can still result in a positive test in competition.

4. True or false: It is easy to predict how long it takes for cannabis to clear from a particular athlete’s body.
 - a. True
 - b. False**
It is very difficult to predict how long it will take for cannabis to clear an athlete’s body – it’s fat-soluble which means it’s stored and can be released slowly over the course of weeks, depending on how chronic the use is.

5. Cannabis is a threshold substance, which means:
 - a. Presence below a certain concentration will not result in a positive test**
According to the Prohibited List, cannabis is a threshold substance, which means that its presence in a sample below a certain concentration (150 ng/mL) will not result in a positive test. That said, it’s easy to cross this threshold, and there’s no easy way to predict how much consumption will result in this concentration.
 - b. It is on the threshold of being taken off the Prohibited List