Doping in sport

What is doping?

Some athletes take illegal substances (drugs) to improve their performance. This is doping - and it’s cheating.

Why do sports people use drugs?

Today athletes are more competitive. The better they are, the more money they can make. It’s becoming harder and harder to get to the top and so the temptation to take drugs to win is hard to resist.

Of course, doping is not new. In Ancient Greece and Rome, athletes ate a lot of honey, and they also drank caffeine and took strychnine! These substances are stimulants. Today, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) has banned many stimulants and it has also introduced testing.
How do drugs help athletes?

Some drugs help athletes develop bigger and stronger muscles. Others help them to train harder or reduce pain, so when they have an injury, they can continue to train. But many of these drugs have side effects. These can be very serious, for example, heart disease, cancer, or addiction!

Extreme doping!

Red blood cells take oxygen around the body. The more oxygen you have in your blood, the better your performance. Blood doping is when red blood cells are taken from an athlete’s body and they are frozen. Just before a competition, the red blood cells are returned into the athlete’s body. This improves performance and it’s illegal.

Testing for doping

The IOC can test an athlete at any time during an Olympic Games. Today, experts test about half of the competitors, but the first five people to finish in any sport have to do an obligatory test immediately.

The IOC tested 3,000 athletes during the London Olympics in 2012. Thirteen of the people tested positive for banned drugs and two of them were disqualified and lost their medals.