



World Athletics introduces SRY gene test for athletes wishing to compete in the female category

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How many times does an athlete need to take the SRY test in their lifetime?

Athletes wishing to compete in the female category need to take the SRY test just once in their lifetime. If their SRY test is negative for the Y chromosome (i.e. the Y chromosome is absent) then they are eligible to compete in the female category in all world ranking competitions. If their test result is positive for the Y chromosome (i.e. shows presence of the Y chromosome) they can compete in the female category in non-world ranking competitions or in another category other than the female category.

2. How long does the entire process take (i.e. from the cheek swab/blood test through to receiving the result)?

Once a laboratory has received an athlete's cheek swab or blood sample it can take between one and two weeks for the sample to be analysed and the results issued. This depends on the country and the laboratory. It is important to know this information so an athlete can get their cheek swab/blood sample carried out as soon as possible.

3. Who is the testing provider and where is their laboratory based?

In the short-term and for the World Athletics Championships Tokyo 25, Member Federations will be conducting the tests for their athletes, in the same way, and perhaps using the same provider, as they did when they carried out their Covid-19 swab tests in 2020 and 2021. World Athletics will contribute up to US\$100 per test for athletes competing in Tokyo. In the long-term, World Athletics is exploring the appointment of a global testing provider.

4. How accurate and reliable is the SRY cheek swab test in cases of intersex variations or chromosomal anomalies?

The SRY test is extremely accurate and the risk of false negative or positive is extremely unlikely. When the sample collection is properly conducted and the laboratory uses an FDA or CE In-vitro Diagnosis kit relying on Quantitative Fluorescent Polymerase Chain Reaction, the accuracy of this test is extremely high with very good sensitivity and specificity.

5. Can an athlete still compete while their sample is being processed?

All athletes wishing to participate in the World Athletics Championships Tokyo 25 must meet the eligibility criteria by 1 September 2025, which is the closing date for entries and the date the regulations come into effect. Therefore, all samples should be processed by this date.

6. What privacy protections are in place to ensure that the results of the SRY test are kept confidential and who has access to the samples and results?

All test results should be held by the athlete, unless the athlete chooses to share it with their personal or team physician or unless national prescription laws state that the prescribing physician will be sent the result. Any athlete who receives a request from the World Athletics Medical Manager, and only this person, will upload their test on a secure, encrypted platform created by World Athletics. The test result can only be accessed and viewed by the World Athletics Medical Manager.

7. How will the test results be interpreted in borderline or complex cases, such as individuals with androgen insensitivity syndrome?

As stated in the regulations, we are testing for the absence or presence of the Y gene. Tests for this are extremely accurate and the risk of false negative or positive is extremely unlikely. Where there is a positive or presence of the gene, then the Medical Manager will consult with the athlete concerned about what they would like to do and how they would like to proceed with a further assessment including any further support they may need. Only after a further assessment can it be confirmed whether an athlete has androgen insensitivity syndrome or not.

8. Will athletes have the right to appeal or request further testing if they believe the SRY test result does not accurately reflect their biological sex?

If an athlete contests the validity of the test and result it will be for the athlete to take up with the provider of the test, seek another test or consult with the Medical Manager. The appeal provisions in the regulations concern challenges to their validity, legality, and/or proper interpretation and application and may only be challenged by an athlete who, but for Eligibility Rule 3.5, would have met all the requirements in the regulations. Such challenges can only be made to the Court of Arbitration for Sport.

9. How does the use of the SRY test align with international human rights standards and the principles of fairness, dignity and inclusion in sport?

The use of the SRY test is designed to uphold the principles of fairness, dignity and inclusion in sport by ensuring that eligibility criteria for female competition

are applied consistently and transparently.

World Athletics consulted extensively with affected individuals and groups and specifically asked about the preference for the type of test to be taken. A wide range of stakeholders responded, and the majority supported the implementation of the regulations including the SRY cheek swab test. These measures aim to balance the rights of all athletes while maintaining the integrity of female competition in line with and respecting international human rights standards. The test is noninvasive and easy to administer, and World Athletics is contributing US\$100 to the costs of the tests. The regulations also state that no stigmatisation or improper discrimination will be tolerated. In particular, persecution of, or campaigns against, an athlete simply on the basis that their appearance does not conform to gender stereotypes, are unacceptable.

10. How will a positive test result be handled?

A positive SRY test may occur if the athlete is a transgender individual with a male chromosomes (46XY) regardless of their past, present or future gender affirming hormonal therapy. A positive test may be announced if the athlete is diagnosed or undiagnosed with a 46XY DSD condition. Indeed, in some cases, such individuals with typically male chromosomes may have atypical development of reproductive or sexual anatomy due to variations in the SRY gene or other related genetic factors. Some are assigned a male gender at birth whereas other are assigned a female gender at birth. If further biological and medical assessment confirm a 46XY DSD condition, this means that while the athletes' chromosomes are typically male (XY), there may be variations in their sexual development. This could affect:

- reproductive anatomy (e.g., differences in genital development, gonads, or internal structures).
- hormone production (e.g., testosterone levels may be affected).
- fertility potential (some individuals may have reduced or absent fertility).

An athlete with a 46XY DSD condition may be advised by the World Athletics Medical Manager to undergo further medical assessment if informed consent is obtained. Upon confirmation of a 46XY DSD condition, the athlete may be invited, following regular discussion with an independent expert medical team, for regular monitoring, treatments such as hormone therapy or surgical options, depending on their individual needs and future life plans. However, it is important to note that if the SRY test and the subsequent medical assessment confirm that the athlete has a 46XY DSD condition then, unless the athlete has an established 46XY condition called Complete Androgen Insensitivity (CAIS), this athlete is ineligible to compete in the female category in a world ranking competition.



At this point and if needed, a healthcare specialist will discuss the results with the athlete in detail, helping them understand any medical, psychological, or social implications.

11. What are the potential consequences of a refusal to take the SRY test?

The athlete can refuse to take the SRY test. In such a case, they will not be granted eligibility to compete in world ranking competitions but can still compete in non-world ranking competitions or in another category than the female category.

12. Why have you created transitional provisions for DSD athletes?

The position is that a very small number of known DSD athletes eligible to compete under the current regulations would be eligible for the remainder of their career provided they continue to maintain their testosterone below 2.5 nmol/L.

13. If you have provisional measures for current DSD athletes, why are you not providing the same for transgender athletes?

A provision has been incorporated into the regulations for a very small number of athletes currently competing in elite international competition in compliance with the 2023 DSD regulations. No transgender athletes currently compete in elite international competition.

14. What concrete strategies are offered to XY athletes who will no longer be able to compete in the women's category?

The 46XY athlete will be able to compete in non-world ranking competitions or in the male or open category if available. Offering them an alternative role in athletics (like coaching or officiating) is something that has been discussed, too.

15. Are you exploring/planning to explore alternative categories?

Our focus at the moment is to implement the SRY test across all world ranking competitions. Any decision to look at alternative categories will be taken by Council.