

STEROIDS: THE FACTS

PERFORMANCE AND IMAGE ENHANCING DRUGS (PIEDs)

WHAT ARE ANABOLIC STEROIDS?

Most *anabolic androgenic* steroids are synthetic products based on the structure of testosterone, the natural male sex hormone responsible for the development of masculine characteristics.

Anabolic means tissue building and muscular development and *androgenic* means male producing, and is responsible for the development of secondary male sex characteristics such as deepening of the voice and increased body hair.

Anabolic steroids are very different from steroids commonly used for medical treatment (corticosteroids) such as prednisone, which is used to treat asthma.

Athletes, body builders and some young people may use steroids illegally to improve their appearance and athletic performance. Steroids are also used illegally for body modification. When prescribed by a doctor and used according to instructions, steroids can help treat some medical conditions.

Anabolic steroids are also known as steroids, roids, HGH, gear, juice, vets' drugs, caseys, andro, gym candy, pumpers, stackers, balls or bulls, weight trainers, arnies or A's, Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs (PIEDs).

WHAT ARE PERFORMANCE AND IMAGE ENHANCING DRUGS?

Performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs) are substances taken by people with the intention of improving their physical appearance and to enhance their sporting performance.

HORMONES AND PEPTIDES

Hormones are chemicals released by the body. For example, the pituitary gland naturally releases growth hormone which tells bones and muscles to grow and repair. There are numerous artificial hormones and hormone stimulating drugs in the PIEDs market.

Peptides are small proteins. Some forms can be injected and stimulate the release of human growth hormones. These have become increasingly popular among professional and amateur athletes as they are hard to detect due to how quickly they are absorbed by the body.

FORMS OF ANABOLIC STEROIDS

Steroids are available in tablet form, injectable water based or oil based fluids, and rub on creams.

WHAT DOES CYCLING MEAN?

Cycling is periods on and off steroids, which some people use to try and avoid the worst side effects of steroid use. Sometimes other medicines are needed to offset the adverse effects of the steroids such as tamoxifen. There is no evidence that these approaches actually work.

WHAT DOES STACKING MEAN?

Stacking is the practice of using various amounts of different steroids together to try to produce specific effects. There is no evidence this actually works, and the more steroids taken at any one time, the higher the risk of side effects.

INJECTING AND TRAINING

There is **NO** benefit in injecting into the muscle group that is due to be trained on that particular day. Injecting into a particular muscle, such as calves, pectorals, or biceps can be potentially dangerous, and will not lead to any special growth in size of the muscle that was injected.

ORAL VS. INJECTABLE

Oral steroids can be toxic to the liver. Injecting exposes users to a host of harmful bacterial infections and result in injecting related injuries such as skin abscesses (sores with pus).

EFFECTS OF STEROIDS

Misusing steroids can have dangerous side effects.

What steroids do to you depends on:

- how much you use
- how often you use
- your size and weight
- your age
- whether you are male or female
- how good your general health is
- whether you use steroids with other drugs
- if there is a family history of health issues, such as blood pressure, kidney problems, liver problems etc.

POTENTIAL EFFECTS

Men and women

- acne
- bloating
- jaundice (yellowing of skin or eyes) from effects on the liver
- heart problems - abnormal heart rhythms (due to use with diuretics), high blood pressure, and/or heart attack
- increased LDL cholesterol levels
- diabetes, kidney problems
- permanent liver damage, liver tumours
- decreased immune function.

Men

- baldness
- aggressiveness
- shrinking testicles
- enlargement of the prostate
- impotence
- development of breast tissue (man boobs)
- infertility.

Women

- hair growth on face, back and bottom
- permanent deep voice
- hair loss
- decreased breast size
- problems with menstrual cycle (periods)
- enlarged clitoris
- infertility.

In children and teenagers, anabolic steroids may stunt growth.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Steroid use can cause anxiety, depression, paranoia and psychosis in people who have a vulnerability to mental health problems.

Drug use can lead to social and emotional problems and affect a person's relationship with family and friends. It may impair your capacity as a parent/primary carer of children. People who use steroids often report they experience:

- anger
- mood changes
- increased aggression
 - roid rage
- frustration
- depression
- over competitiveness.

Many of these effects can have long lasting health effects.

STEROID RELATED EMERGENCY

If you can't wake someone up or you are concerned that they may have sustained a head injury from a drug related fall - call an ambulance immediately - dial **Triple Zero (000)**.

If the person has been mixing steroids with other drugs (e.g. cocaine), tell the NSW Ambulance paramedic exactly what they have taken. Paramedics are there to help. Generally paramedics don't involve the police **unless** there is danger to themselves or other people/children, someone dies, or a crime (such as violence or theft) has been committed.

MIXING WITH OTHER DRUGS

Combining one steroid with another (stacking) or with an illicit drug (e.g. cocaine), cause other harms.

THE LAW

The possession and use of steroids is illegal without a prescription.

In addition, steroids are prohibited for use in professional sports.

SELF-HELP ASSOCIATIONS

na.org.au for **Narcotics Anonymous Australia**, a non profit organisation that helps people abstain from drugs.

INJECTING STEROIDS

Injecting steroids increases the likelihood of contracting bacterial infections and skin abscesses. It is safest to NEVER share injecting equipment.

In NSW, sterile injecting equipment is available from **Needle and Syringe Program (NSP)** outlets and from selected pharmacists.

Call the **Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS)** for the nearest **NSP** outlet.

PREGNANCY AND BREASTFEEDING

The safest option if you are pregnant or considering pregnancy is to avoid steroid use. Inform antenatal staff of steroid use and attend regular antenatal checkups. Steroid use may affect fertility and may cause secondary male characteristics in a female baby.

If a mother uses steroids while breastfeeding, it is possible that the drug will be present in her milk and have adverse effects on the baby.

It is generally risky to take any drug while breastfeeding without medical advice.

WITHDRAWAL

Some people experience a range of symptoms after stopping regular steroid use such as:

- anxiety
- depression
- insomnia
- mood swings
- nausea
- headaches
- lethargy
- erectile dysfunction (men)

These tend to reduce with time.

If you are experiencing problems with withdrawal, contact your doctor or health centre.

TOLERANCE AND DEPENDENCE

There is no evidence as yet that you can develop a tolerance to steroids, but the muscle gains of steroid use will taper off after a while, as most bodies have a limit to their muscular development.

Dependence on steroids means that it takes up much of your thoughts, emotions and activities. Not all people who use steroids are dependent. Dependent people find it very difficult to quit using steroids.

INFORMATION AND ADVICE

For free and confidential advice about alcohol and other drugs 24 hours, 7 days a week, call the **National Alcohol and Other Drug hotline: 1800 250 015**. It will automatically direct you to the Alcohol and Drug Information Service in the state or territory you are calling from.

Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority (ASADA), a government statutory authority with responsibility for implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code (the Code) in Australia can provide information about banned drugs in professional sport. Visit www.asada.gov.au

Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council provides links to Aboriginal community controlled health services across NSW. Visit www.ahmrc.org.au for information about AHMRC members including a regional map, information and links to members websites.

Drug and Alcohol Multicultural Education Centre (DAMEC) provides services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Contact DAMEC on **(02) 8113 1301** or for counselling and support services for CALD communities call **(02) 8706 0150**.

Drug Info provides facts and resources on alcohol and other drugs and the prevention of related harm. Visit www.druginfo.adf.org.au

State Library of New South Wales Drug Info provides up to date information on alcohol and other drugs in public libraries throughout NSW. Visit www.druginfo.sl.nsw.gov.au

ehedspace provides mental health and wellbeing

support, information and services for young people (12-25 years) and their family and friends. Visit www.eheadspace.org.au

Family Drug Support provides 24-7 telephone support to families in crisis due to drug and alcohol issues. Call the Helpline on **1300 368 186** or visit www.fds.org.au

Kids Helpline is a free, 24 hour counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25 years. Counselling is offered via the Kids Helpline website www.kidshelp.com.au or email, or call **1800 55 1800**.

Nepean Youth Drug and Alcohol Service (NYDAS) works within a holistic model of care to address a range of issues for young people (12 –20 years of age) related to their alcohol and other drug use. Call **(02) 4734 2129** or **(02) 4734 1333**.

NSW Users and AIDS Association (NUAA) is a peak drug user organisation in NSW providing harm reduction information and blood borne virus prevention peer education. Visit www.nuaa.org.au

Poisons Information Centre is a 24/7 call centre service available across Australia. Call **13 11 26**

ReachOut is an Australian online youth mental health service with a mobile-friendly site and forums where you can access help, information and support. Visit au.reachout.com

Sexual Health Info Link provides free and confidential sexual health support and information. Visit www.shil.nsw.gov.au

TAFE NSW provides help with education, career development or personal matters. Students can contact a local TAFE/university counsellor. Visit www.tafensw.edu.au

Youth Action is the peak organisation for young people in NSW. Visit www.youthaction.org.au and use the search option to access a directory of NSW youth services.

Youth Solutions provides services for young people 12 to 25 years of age and the community including prevention and health promotion, drug and alcohol education, community programs and information and referral. Visit www.youthsolutions.com.au or call **(02) 4628 2319** [provides services to young people in Macarthur & Wingecarribee].

NSW Health aims to reduce drug-related harm for individuals and the community by providing the facts, including the possible health, social and economic consequences of using alcohol and other drugs.

