Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs: Factsheet



Evidence ratings:

This resource has undergone expert review. See our Help/Q&A section for more details.

Year: Year 7–8, Year 9–10, Year 11–12

Targeted Drugs: Steroids

Tags: steroids, roids, PIEDs, juice, gear

Time Allocated: Partial lesson (under 45mins)

Origin: Australian

Cost:
Free

What are Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs?

Performance and image-enhancing drugs are substances that are used to try to enhance a person's appearance or physical abilities, either by growing muscle or reducing body fat.

The main substances that are used for this purpose are:

- Human and animal anabolic and androgenic steroids
- Human growth hormone
- Other reproductive hormones
- Diuretics

Performance and Image-Enhancing Drugs are sometimes called steroids, roids, juice, and gear.

How many young people have tried Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs?

According to the 2022-2023 Australian secondary schools' survey, 1 in 50 young people (2%) aged 12-17 used performance or image-enhancing drugs in the past year.

The 2022-2023 National Drug Strategy Household survey reported that less than 0.2% of people aged 14 and older used steroids in the past year.

What are the effects of Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs?

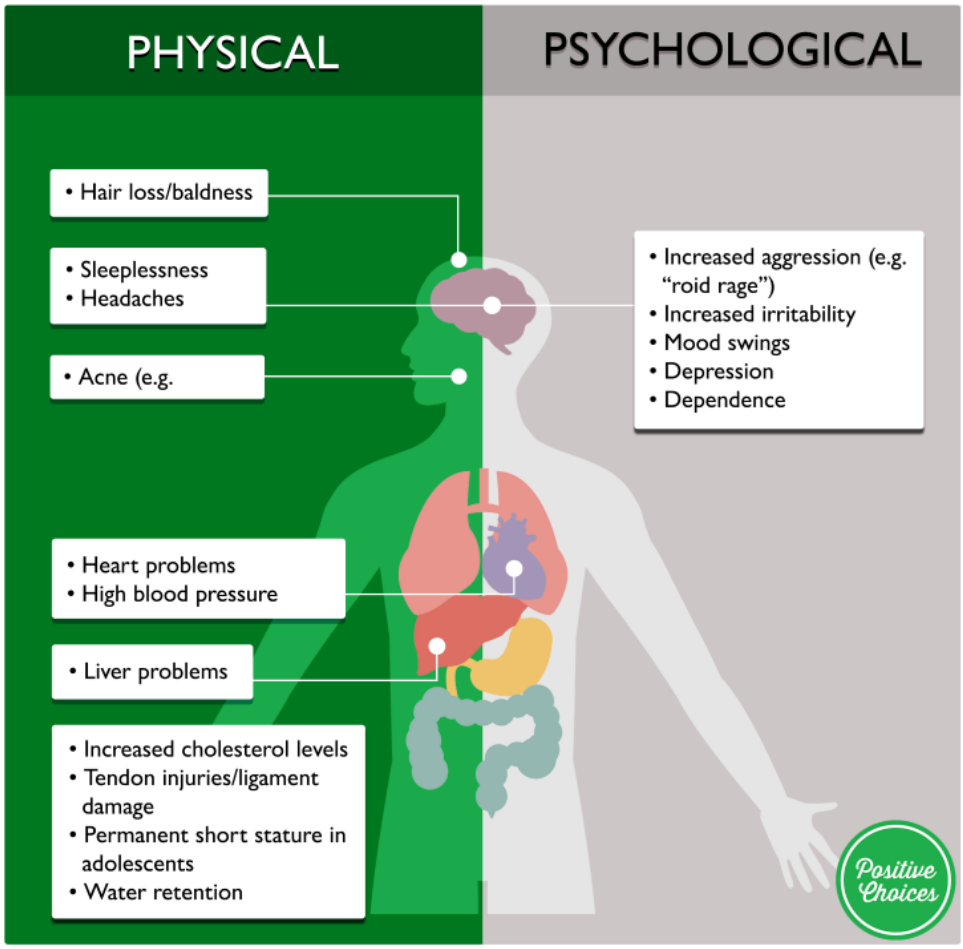
Initially, performance and image-enhancing drugs can cause mood changes, such as euphoria (intense feelings of happiness), increased confidence and self-esteem, more energy and motivation to exercise. People who use these drugs feel less tired and may have trouble sleeping. Libido (interest in sex) commonly increases but can decrease.



Performance and image enhancing drugs can cause problems when competing in sporting competitions. Many of the substances are banned because of the health risks involved, the shame it brings to sport as a whole, and in order to encourage fair competition. For these reasons, use of performance and image enhancing drugs can result in disqualification from competition, as well as harming an athlete's long-term sporting career and reputation.

The effects of performance and image enhancing drugs can be physical or psychological, as listed in the table below.

Physical	**Psychological**
Acne (e.g. pimples)	Increased aggression (e.g. "roid rage")
High blood pressure	Increased irritability
Liver problems	Mood swings
Heart problems	Mania
Increased cholesterol levels	Depression
Hair loss / baldness	Dependence (see glossary)
Sleeplessness	
Headaches	
Tendon injuries / ligament damage	
Permanent short stature in adolescents	
Water retention	
Specifically for males: Gynaecomastia (abnormal growth of breasts) Shrinking testicles Prostate problems	
Specifically for females: Clitoral enlargement Smaller breasts Deepening of the voice	
Specifically for young people: Stunted growth (when high hormone levels from steroids signal to the body to stop bone growth too early) Stunted height (if teens use steroids before their growth spurt)	



SPECIFICALLY FOR...		
YOUNG PEOPLE:	FEMALES:	MALES:
• Stunted growth (when high hormone levels from steroids signal to the body to stop bone growth too early) • Stunted height (if teens use steroids before their growth spurt)	• Clitoral enlargement • Smaller breasts • Deepening of the voice	• Gynaecomastia (abnormal growth of breasts) • Shrinking testicles • Prostate problems

Evidence Base

This factsheet was developed following expert review by researchers at the Matilda Centre for Research in Mental Health and Substance Use at the University of Sydney, the National Drug & Alcohol Research Centre at the University of New South Wales, and the National Drug Research Institute at Curtin University.

Sources

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