Positive Choices
Drug and Alcohol Information
Get informed, stay smart, stay safe

Drugs a-to-z

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.

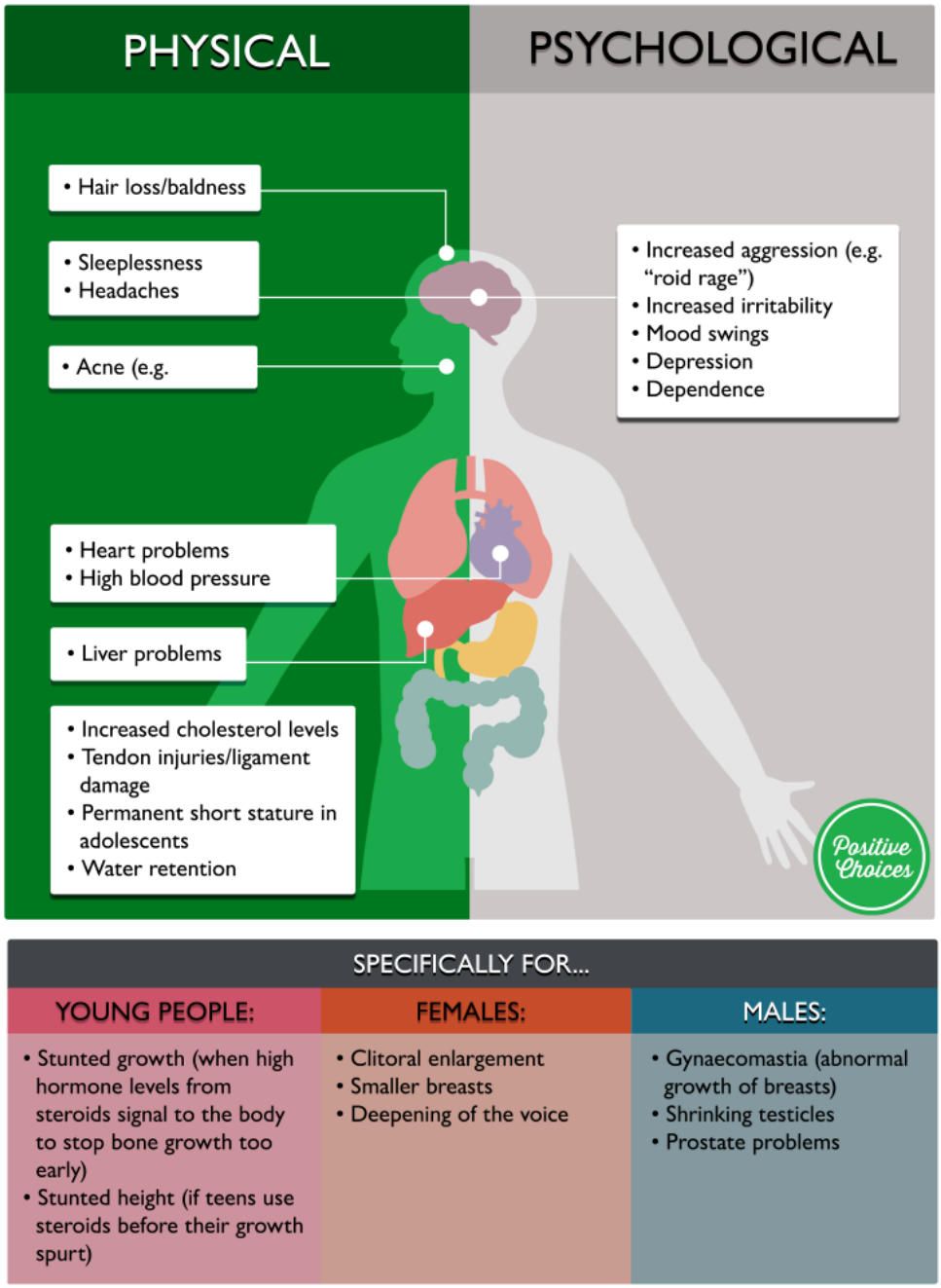
What are the effects of Performance and Image Enhancing Drugs?

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

1. Scully, M., Koh, I., Bain, E., Wakefield, M., & Durkin, S. (2023). ASSAD 2022–2023: Australian secondary school students' use of alcohol and other substances. Cancer Council Victoria.
2. Momaya, A., Fawal, M., & Estes, R. (2015). Performance-enhancing substances in sports: a review of the literature. Sports Med, 45(4), 517-531. doi:10.1007/s40279-015-0308-9
3. Sagoe, D., Andreassen, C.S., and Pallesen, S. (2014). The aetiology and trajectory of anabolicandrogenic steroid use initiation: a systematic review and synthesis of qualitative research. Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy, 9(27).
4. Larance, B., Degenhardt, L., Dillon, P., Copeland, J. (2005). Use of performance and image enhancing drugs among men: A review. National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre Technical Report 232.
5. Bird, S. R., Goebel, C., Burke, L. M., & Greaves, R. F. (2016). Doping in sport and exercise: anabolic, ergogenic, health and clinical issues. Ann Clin Biochem, 53(Pt 2), 196-221. doi:10.1177/0004563215609952
6. White, V. & Williams, T. (2016). Australian secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol, and over the counter and illicit substances in 2014. Report prepared for the Drug Strategy Branch, Australian Government Department of Health by the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer, Cancer Council, Victoria.

7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023). 2022-2023 National Drug Strategy Household Survey Report. AIHW: Canberra.
8. Corrigan, B. (1996). Anabolic steroids and the mind. The Medical Journal of Australia, 165(4).
9. Pope, H. G., Jr., Wood, R. I., Rogol, A., Nyberg, F., Bowers, L., & Bhasin, S. (2014). Adverse health consequences of performance-enhancing drugs: an Endocrine Society scientific statement. Endocr Rev, 35(3), 341-375. doi:10.1210/er.2013-1058
10. Kanayama, G., Hudson, J. I., & Pope, H. G., Jr. (2008). Long-term psychiatric and medical consequences of anabolic- androgenic steroid abuse: a looming public health concern? Drug Alcohol Depend, 98(1-2), 1-12. doi:10.1016/j.drugalcdep.2008.05.004
11. van Amsterdam, J., Opperhuizen, A., & Hartgens, F. (2010). Adverse health effects of anabolic-androgenic steroids. Regul Toxicol Pharmacol, 57(1), 117-123. doi:10.1016/j.yrtph.2010.02.001
12. Ip, E. J., Lu, Debbie H., Barnett, Mitchell J., Tenerowicz, Michael J., Vo, Justin C., Perry, Paul J. (2012). Psychological and Physical Impact of Anabolic-Androgenic Steroid Dependence. Pharmacotherapy: The Journal of Human Pharmacology and Drug Therapy, 32(10), 1875-9114. doi:10.1002/j.1875-9114.2012.01123
13. Kam, P. C. A. Y., M. (2005). Anabolic steroid abuse: physiological and anaesthetic considerations. Anaesthesia, 60, 685-692.
14. Larance, B., Degenhardt, L., Copeland, J., & Dillon, P. (2008). Injecting risk behaviour and related harm among men who use performance- and image-enhancing drugs. Drug Alcohol Rev, 27(6), 679-686. doi:10.1080/09595230802392568
15. Hope, V. D., McVeigh, J., Marongiu, A., Evans-Brown, M., Smith, J., Kimergard, A., . . . Ncube, F. (2015). Injection site infections and injuries in men who inject image- and performance-enhancing drugs: prevalence, risks factors, and healthcare seeking.
Epidemiol Infect, 143(1), 132-140. doi:10.1017/S0950268814000727 Evans-Brown, M., McVeigh, J., Perkins, C. and Bellis, M.A. (2012). Human Enhancement Drugs: The Emerging Challenges to Public Health. (E. Clark Ed.). Great Britain: Centre for Public Health, North West Public Health Observatory.
16. Brennan, R., Wells, J. S., & Van Hout, M. C. (2016). The injecting use of image and performance-enhancing drugs (IPED) in the general population: a systematic review. Health Soc Care Community. doi:10.1111/hsc.12326

© 2026 Positive Choices | Built by Netfront