

PERFORMANCE & IMAGE ENHANCING DRUGS (PIEDS)

Ever heard the term PIEDs? Do you know what it stands for?

PIEDs is an acronym for performance and image enhancing drugs.

WHAT ARE PIEDs?

PIEDs, including steroids, are a large group of compounds produced by the body of all animals, including humans. These substances, in tablet form or via injection, are taken by some to improve physical appearance and to enhance sporting and/or work performance. For many users, body image is important and some people believe that the use of PIEDs may help give them the body they are looking for.

Amateur or professional athletes are another group who may use PIEDs believing it may give them an advantage in physical strength and endurance and also help with a quicker recovery.

However, every drug has the potential to cause harm and PIEDs are not excluded from this.

There are a number of different types of PIEDs including:

- **Anabolic-androgenic steroids.** You may have heard the terms *roids*, *gear* or *juice* – all common names for anabolic steroids.

Your body produces steroids naturally however they can be produced synthetically. These synthetic hormones imitate male sex hormones, specifically testosterone, and are used due to their anabolic effects. This means that they speed up the molecule-building process that assists in the growth and repair of muscle tissue.

- **Peptides** is the second group of PIEDs. Peptides are short amino acids joined together by peptide bonds which stimulate the release of human growth hormone or HGH. Human growth hormone has an important role to play in our body's muscle and bone growth. Peptides are quickly absorbed by the body and have the benefits of readily building lean muscle and releasing stored fat.

- The final type of PIEDs is **hormones**.

Hormones are chemicals released from the body. An example is the HGH that is released from the pituitary gland telling our bones and muscles to grow and repair. Artificial hormones are available on the PIEDs market to simulate the role of growth hormone by increasing muscle growth and repair. However, there are risks to using artificial hormones.

HOW CAN PIEDs AFFECT YOUR BODY AND WELLBEING?

Using PIEDs, whether they are anabolic-androgenic steroids, peptides or hormones, may cause negative physical and psychological (mental wellbeing) side effects. Remember, people's experiences using PIEDs, or any other drug for that matter, won't be the same. The effects and possible harms can vary enormously and are determined by a combination of factors connected to the individual using the drug, the drug(s) they choose to use, and the environment in which they are using them.

When using PIEDs, physical size, exercise level, the amount, how it's taken – orally or injected into the muscle, and where it's taken can also change the drug use experience.

Some known side-effects for females include: growing facial, back and bottom hair; changes or stoppage to their menstrual cycle; voice deepening and breast size decrease; and infertility issues.

For males, testicles can shrink, sperm count can reduce, they can develop breasts and may become impotent or bald. And these are just a few of the side effects.

Some of the side effects that may be experienced are irreversible and some can lead to death. In addition, many PIEDs are made illegally. They contain harmful contaminants and unknown substances which may increase the side effects experienced. Also, many steroids are designed for animal use and not for human consumption and a number of the synthetic peptide hormones are experimental and not yet approved for human use. This makes it very difficult to predict what specific harms the drug may actually cause (Australian Drug Foundation, 2016).



Use of PIEDs can also affect mental wellbeing by increasing anxiety, causing violent mood swings and unpredictability, increasing impulsivity, and causing depression.

WHAT EFFECTS CAN PIEDs HAVE ON A GROWING BODY?

Risks of use can be particularly high for young people. If PIEDs are taken while a person is still growing they can cause a number of problems that may not be able to be reversed such as stunted growth.

WHAT'S THE LAW SAY?

So, are PIEDs against the law? According to the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (2018) it's:

- illegal to manufacture, import, possess, use or supply steroids *without a prescription* or medical practitioner licence and there are penalties in every Australian state and territory
- against the law to inject another person with steroids, or for them to be self-administered without a prescription
- illegal to use steroids in competitive sport. Testing positive for steroids can result in fines, suspensions or permanent bans. Sporting careers can be lost this way.



So, what are our top three messages about PEIDs?

1. All drugs have the potential to cause harm and can affect your body, your mind and your future. This includes PIEDs.
2. PIEDs stands for performance and image enhancing drugs and includes anabolic-androgenic steroids, peptides and hormones. These drugs are taken by some to improve physical appearance and to enhance sporting and/or work performance but their use is not without risk.
3. It's illegal to manufacture, import, possess, use or supply steroids without a prescription or medical practitioner licence and there are penalties in every Australian state and territory if this law is broken.



NEED HELP?

If you or anyone you know is experiencing a drug use issue, contact WA's 24hr Drug and Alcohol Support Line.

- Metro (08) 9442 5000
- Country 1800 198 024
- Emergency 000

Live chat with a qualified and experienced drug counsellor is also offered at:
<http://drugaware.com.au>

REFERENCES

Alcohol and Drug Foundation. (2016). *Performance and image enhancing drugs*. Retrieved from http://thefirststop.org.au/app/uploads/2016/12/adf_pieds.pdf

Alcohol and Drug Foundation. (2018). *Performance and image enhancing drugs*. Retrieved from <https://adf.org.au/drug-facts/PIEDs/>

