

Steroid injections

For image and performance: the risks, staying safer and getting help

What are they?

Anabolic steroids are man-made versions of the male hormone testosterone. People inject them, often with other drugs such as growth hormone or tanning jabs, to build muscle or perform better. They are Class C drugs, legal only on prescription, and products from online or gym sources are often fake, the wrong strength or contaminated.

You might notice

- Spots, oily skin, and thinning hair on your head or back
- Smaller testicles, lower sperm count and fertility problems
- Women: a deeper voice, more facial hair and period changes
- Breast tissue growing in men, sometimes lumpy or tender
- Mood swings, irritability, anger or poor sleep on a cycle
- Low mood, tiredness and low sex drive after stopping a cycle

Hidden risks to your health

Heart and blood

Higher blood pressure, thicker blood and worse cholesterol strain the heart

Liver and kidneys

Liver damage, especially from tablets, and kidney strain over time

Hormones and fertility

Your own testosterone shuts down and can take months to recover

Mind and mood

Aggression or anxiety on a cycle, low mood after, and dependence

Injecting

Abscesses, nerve damage, and HIV or hepatitis from shared kit or vials

What is really in the vial

You can never be sure: fakes and contaminated products are common

Who is more at risk

Under 25s

Women

Using tablets (orals)

Stacking several drugs

Long or back-to-back cycles

Sharing needles or vials

Heart problems in the family

The safest choice is not to use. If you do, regular health checks and safer injecting cut the risks, and we will help without judging you.

If you inject: how to stay safer

Use new kit every time. Free needles, syringes and sharps bins are available from pharmacies and needle services.

Never share anything. Not needles, syringes or vials: one used needle in a shared vial can pass on infection.

Clean hands, clean skin. Wash your hands, swab the spot and let it dry, and use a fresh needle to inject.

Choose and rotate sites. Use large muscles such as the buttock or thigh, and change spot each time.

If you see blood, stop. Blood in the syringe may mean a vein: take the needle out and start again with new kit.

Get rid of kit safely. Put used needles straight into a sharps bin and return it to a pharmacy or service.

What the doctor will do

- 1 Talk in private, without judgement, about what you use
- 2 Check your blood pressure, weight and injection sites
- 3 Blood tests for heart, liver, kidney and hormone health
- 4 Explain results, agree when to recheck, and help you stop

Tell us everything you take, including tablets, post-cycle drugs and other substances, as it changes how results are read. We can also test for HIV and hepatitis.

Call 999 if you have

- Chest pain or tightness
- Sudden breathlessness
- Face drooping or slurred speech
- Spreading red skin and a fever

Contact us the same day if

- A hot, painful injection site
- A painful, swollen calf
- Yellow skin or eyes
- Low mood that scares you

Coming off steroids

Your own testosterone can take months to recover, and low mood, tiredness and low sex drive are common meanwhile. You do not have to manage alone: we can check your hormones and support your mood. Most changes settle, but breast tissue in men or a deeper voice in women may not.

Our GP by SRS Health Group

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Out of hours

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Know the Score: 0800 587 5879