



Australian Government
Department of Defence

Performance and image enhancing drugs and supplements

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization

What are performance and image enhancing drugs?

Performance and image enhancing drugs is a collective term used to describe those drugs which are used to enhance sporting performance (improving strength and/or endurance); mask the use of performance-enhancing drugs to avoid drug testing; improve the body's appearance (increasing muscle size and/or reducing body fat); and to manage the side effects of anabolic steroid use.

The substances included in this group are anabolic-androgenic steroids, human growth hormone, other reproductive hormones, diuretics, stimulants, beta-2 agonists (eg clenbuterol), creatine monohydrate and hormones such as insulin (IGF-1) and thyroxine. The most commonly used performance and image enhancing drugs are anabolic-androgenic steroids.

What are the harms associated with performance and image enhancing drugs use?

In Australia, it is illegal to use anabolic-androgenic steroids without a doctor's prescription. Many of the performance and image enhancing drugs are illegally made and can contain harmful, unknown substances that increase the negative side effects. Often, the steroids obtained illegally are designed for animals and some may not contain any anabolic steroids at all.

The most common side effects of anabolic-androgenic steroids include:

- acne
- reduced size of testicles
- abnormal breast development (gynaecomastia) in men
- masculinisation in women and children
- abnormal liver function (elevated liver enzymes)
- increased risk of hardening of the arteries and blood vessels leading to decreased blood flow and increased risk of heart attack or stroke
- risk of injection-related problems such as injection site pain, abscesses, blood-borne virus infections and injection-related injuries
- changes in sex drive
- increased irritability and aggression
- impulsiveness
- depression
- paranoia
- sleep disorders.

In general, there is very little information available on the side effects of non-medical use of performance and image enhancing drugs other than anabolic-androgenic steroids.

Supplements

What are supplements?

Dietary supplements and complementary medicines may include vitamins, minerals, herbal reparations/botanicals, amino acids, hormones, naturopathic, homeopathic preparations as well as various combinations of these and other substances. The range of products includes pills, capsules, powders, bars, chewable tablets, drinks and teas. Many of these are used as nutritional supplements for an inadequate diet, weight loss/gain and medical purposes. Some may use these with the expectation of increasing physical and or mental performance.

Potential harms

It is important to note that many of these dietary supplements and complementary medicines are not required to undergo the rigorous scientific evaluation to determine their quality, safety and efficacy that is required for registered medicines. All the ingredients contained in the product may not be listed on the label, or be misleading. Defence Health Service personnel do not prescribe or supply dietary supplements or complementary medicines to ADF Personnel unless there is a clear clinical indication for doing so.

Vitamins/Minerals: these common supplements have been proven to be safe at recommended daily intake levels. High doses of vitamins and minerals found in many over-the-counter supplements at best provide no benefit, and at worst can cause harmful effects. Fat-soluble vitamins (A,D,E,K) are particularly dangerous as they are stored in the body and can lead to toxic effects.

Herbal preparations (Botanicals): these are made of plant parts or oils and are used for a variety of effects, many medicinal. Herbs may contain potent chemicals that can be dangerous or cause side effects.

Fitness Supplements: due to the poor regulation of the supplement industry, ADF members may be targeted by marketing that exaggerates or completely invents unproven benefits arising from the use of supplements. The risks of supplement use include; ingesting a potentially harmful substance, money being wasted on products, a risk of being tested positive for a banned substance and negative effects to a person's health.

Unknown Origin: be wary of products purchased online. There are many counterfeit products that are sold online and due to poor regulation, there is no guarantee of the quality or the authenticity of the advertised products. There have been reported cases of people becoming seriously ill and dying due to the unknown and negative effects of supplements purchased online.

Performance and image enhancing drugs prevalence

Although the use of performance and image enhancing drugs within elite sports receives a high level of media attention, there are a number of other groups of performance and image enhancing drugs users, including people who use them for occupational reasons. It is reported that the groups of professionals that may be at risk of functional misuse of anabolic-androgenic steroids and related substances include police, door staff/ security personnel, bodyguards, fire fighters, and members of the Defence forces.

Performance and image enhancing drugs and the ADF

The ADF has a zero tolerance policy on the use of illicit drugs by Defence members. This means that any member found to be using illicit drugs will be required to 'show cause' why they should be permitted to remain in the ADF. The ADF conducts random drug testing of ADF members. Performance and image enhancing drugs remain detectable in urine for a considerable time after use, so a person could return a positive test days, sometimes weeks after, they have used performance and image enhancing drugs.

Where to seek help

If you or someone in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

The ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas **+61 2 9425 3878**.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: **www.defence.gov.au/dco**

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.

As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises. **1800 801 026** or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WVC): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit **www.OpenArms.gov.au**

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.