

Sports Shorts

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

Performance Enhancing Substances

A performance enhancing substance (PES) is any substance used in a way in which it wasn't intended or prescribed, specifically for the purpose of improving sports performance. This includes substances taken in higher than normal doses or without a true medical reason, those used to gain or lose weight, those taken to help the body use oxygen more efficiently, and any agent used to cover up the use of, or minimize, the side effects of another PES. Examples include steroids, human growth hormone (hGH), creatine, stimulants such as ephedrine and caffeine, erythropoietin (EPO), water pills, laxatives and nutritional supplements.

WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO USE PES?

- Boys more than girls
- Kids that use alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- Athletes more than non-athletes
- Football, baseball and basketball players, gymnasts, wrestlers, weightlifters and track athletes
- Kids that are trying to improve their physical appearance

WHERE DO KIDS GET PES?

- From their physician
- At the gym
- On the internet
- Health food stores

HOW DO THEY WORK?

Most PES are taken to build muscle and increase strength. Steroids, hGH and creatine have all been shown to improve strength to varying degrees in studies of adults. Stimulants and steroids can also increase energy levels, allowing for more frequent, prolonged or intense workouts. hGH and creatine have been shown to increase athletic performance in short-duration exercise such as sprints, while stimulants tend to help more with endurance events.

WHAT'S THE DOWNSIDE TO USING PES?

Many of these substances are illegal if obtained without a prescription from a doctor, and all have potential side effects, some more dangerous than others. The Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) policy states that students using PES will be ineligible for competition.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS USING PERFORMING ENHANCING SUBSTANCES

- Rapid gain in strength or muscle bulk
- Severe acne on the face, chest and back
- Premature balding
- Stretch marks
- Growth of breast tissue, shrunken testicles, high-pitched voice (boys)
- Menstrual irregularity, deepened voice, excess hair growth, loss of breast tissue (girls)
- Mood swings/aggressive behavior/depression

What about supplements?

Many times nutritional supplements are thought to be safe because of their name. Unfortunately, these substances are not regulated by the FDA and therefore little is known about the actual ingredients they contain. Oftentimes supplements list misleading information on their labels and lack some or all of the stated ingredients. Studies have shown supplements are sometimes contaminated with steroids or stimulants.

Prevention

Most states, including Ohio, do not test for PES at the high school level and below because it is expensive and relatively few positive tests are found. If you are concerned that your child may be using PES, explain the negative effects that can result, emphasizing disqualification from sport and the adverse effects to physical appearance. If the child is actively trying to improve performance, make an appointment with a registered dietician to discuss proper nutrition or to have him/her work with a certified strength and conditioning coach to make sure workouts are structured in the most beneficial way.

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This information is available on the Ohio AAP website www.ohioaap.org