

Correct injecting technique

- Wash intended injection site with soap and water or alcohol swab before injecting
- Use new alcohol swab to wipe the top of steroid vials before withdrawing liquid
- After drawing up the steroid (using a long green needle), change the needle for an appropriate size, depending on where you are going to inject
- As a guide, use short or long blue needles for the buttock and short blue needles for thighs, shoulders, biceps, and triceps. Needle used depends on size of the muscle to be injected
- Upper outer quadrant of the buttocks and thighs are the most suitable sites as there is a reduced risk of damaging nerves or ligaments
- Insert the needle in at a 90 degree angle and only three-quarters of the way into the muscle in case it snaps; it can then be removed more easily
- Don't inject more than 2mls at one time in smaller muscle groups
- Don't use the same site more than twice per week as this prevents scar tissue build up
- When you are in the muscle, pull the plunger back slightly to see if any blood appears. If blood appears, pull out and hold firm pressure on the site until bleeding stops. Try again with a clean needle on the syringe
- Steroids should only be injected into muscle – do not inject into the vein; this is dangerous
- After the injection, rub the site to which you have just injected to ensure dispersal of the steroid
- Dispose of used needles in a sharps bin and return them to your local needle exchange service.

Protect yourself from blood borne viruses (BBV)

Always use your own sterile injecting equipment. Sharing needles or re-using your own injecting equipment increases the risk of contracting a BBV.

Visit the Harm Reduction Team (HRT) on the corner of Spittal Street and Lady Lawson Street, Edinburgh, or your local GP for Hepatitis B vaccinations.

To make an appointment at HRT ring 0131 537 8300 or drop in and ask about the next session for Blood Borne Virus testing.

Know the source of your steroids

There are many fake steroids around so it can be difficult to know what you are buying. Inspect the vials for tampering, make sure the safety seals are intact and check for correct labelling and a batch number on the packaging. Injectable steroids should be a clear oily liquid, however, the colour of the liquid may vary depending on the steroid. Any pure sample of one steroid should be the same colour throughout.

Start with the lowest dose/stack possible

'Dose' refers to the amount of steroid used. 'Stacking' is the use of more than one steroid at a time. Everyone is different and we each react differently to the same amount. It is recommended to start on a low dose to see how your body responds. The right amount could help you to grow, allow you to train harder and assist in injury recovery. Too large an amount will only increase your risks of side effects.

In the process of establishing your individual regime keep a diary of how you feel and what changes are occurring in your body, before, during and after your cycle. Seek medical advice, read any available brochures and talk to other users before undergoing a cycle. You may find you can use a lot less with the same outcomes.

An individual's ideal dose is dependant on their:

- Body shape and size
- Age
- Gender
- Desired outcome

In general, a regime should begin with a low androgenic/ anabolic dose and move towards using larger amounts before tapering off at the end of the cycle. Referring to your diary can help you adjust your regime/cycle to your needs and desired outcomes.

Shortest possible cycle with maximum time off

Your body needs a break from steroids as continuous use can be harmful. Not only does the body need a break from possible side effects, but the steroid receptors also need time to regain sensitivity. Just remember **"whatever time on, at least same time off!"**

Legal status

Steroids are legally available on prescription from your GP. They are not illegal to possess for personal use but **possession with intent to sell or supply is a criminal offence**. They are classified as Class C under the Misuse of Drugs Act.

Optimise diet and training regimes

If your desired outcome is to build muscle and bulk up, you must train, eat and sleep very well before even thinking about steroids. The body takes time to grow and so taking excessive amounts of steroids does not mean you will grow super fast or become super strong. A well-planned, balanced diet with regular **resistance** weight training (at least three times a week) is recommended during and after your cycle. Your GP can refer you to a dietician to assist you in personalising your nutritional needs.

Have regular health checks

There are many side effects associated with taking steroids, some of which can be serious. These symptoms can be physical or psychological. If you notice anything unusual, stop using the steroid and seek medical advice.

Find a GP who you are happy to talk to. An ideal situation would be to have regular health checks with them before, during and after your cycle.

For more information, including detail about side effects, please read:

- Anabolic Steroids – A guide for users and professionals, exchangesupplies.org
- Steroids +other drugs used to enhance performance and image, exchangesupplies.org
- For a 20min film on preparing & injecting steroids go to: <https://www.ipedinfo.co.uk>
Click on FILM/VIDEO
- <https://services.nhslothian.scot/harmreductionteam/EdinburghSteroidClinic/Pages/default.aspx>