Where to seek help

Reading this fact sheet has been a good start. There are however, many other self-help resources available for you to obtain more information. These include:


You may also wish to discuss things with a close friend or family member who you trust to be supportive. Sometimes it can really help to share a problem and get a different perspective on it by taking it over.

ADF Chaplains are also available and can provide support and impartial guidance without needing a referral or going through the Chain of Command.

The Family Information Network for Defence (FIND) (1800 020 031) is a telephone service that provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern such as ADF pay, entitlements, allowances or conditions of service. This is a toll-free, confidential service. It is available to Service members and their families anywhere in Australia.

Further support available

If you need further support, there are more resources available to you.

Your chain of command can provide advice, support and referral if necessary to the local Medical Centre or Mental Health and Psychology Section (MHPS).

You can also approach your local Medical Centre directly and speak with a Nursing Officer or Medical Officer, or you can approach your local Mental Health and Psychology Section (MHPS).

If you need to speak to someone urgently after hours, the ADF Mental Health Strategy All-hours Support Line (ASL) is available. This is a confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families that can be contacted 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 1800 628 036 (FREECALL within Australia) or 61 2 9425 3878 (outside Australia).

VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families.

The Defence Community Organisation (DCO) also provides services to families of ADF members 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round, including public holidays. During normal business hours, the first point of call is the Duty Social Worker or Military Support Officer. Outside these hours, calls should be directed to the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) on 1800 801 036, or if calling from overseas, 61 2 9359 4842.
What are performance and image enhancing drugs?

Performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs) is a collective term used to describe those drugs which are used to enhance sporting performance (e.g. improving strength and/or endurance), mask the use of performance-enhancing drugs to avoid drug testing, improve the body’s appearance (e.g. 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 (AAS), human growth hormone (hGH), other reproductive hormones, diuretics, stimulants, beta-2 agonists (e.g., clenbuterol), creatine monohydrate and hormones such as insulin (IGF-1) and thyroxine. The most commonly used PIEDs are AAS.

Performance and image enhancing drugs prevalence

Although the use of PIEDs within elite sports receives a high level of media attention, there are a number of other groups of PIED users, including people who use for occupational reasons. In research conducted by Drug & Alcohol Services South Australia in 2008, it was reported that the groups of professionals that may be at risk of functional misuse of AAS and related substances include: police; door staff/ security personnel; bodyguards; fire fighters; and members of the defence forces.

There is very little reliable data on the prevalence of PIED use in Australia.

What are the harms associated with PIED use?

The most common side effects of AAS include:

- acne
- reduced size of testicles
- abnormal breast development (gynaecomastia) in men
- masculinisation in women and children
- abnormal liver function (elevated 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
- impulsivity
- depression
- paranoia
- sleep disorders

In general, there is very little information available on the side effects of non-medical use of PIEDs other than AAS.

PIEDs and the ADF

The ADF has a zero tolerance policy on the use of illicit drugs by its 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. Some PIEDs remain detectable in urine for some time after use, so a person could return a positive test days after they have used PIEDs.