

The Dummy's Guide to

PEDs

News of performance-enhancing drugs pops up all too often these days. But to yap about them is not to understand them. Here's a quick (and dirty) cheat sheet for navigating tomorrow's headlines. And please, don't try these at home.

By Shaun Assael | Photographs by Craig Cutler

WORLD ANTI-DOPING AGENCY KEY (b) Banned (cb) Banned in competition only (nb) Not banned

Most Likely to Keep 'Em Hanging

HCG (b)

Also known as Human chorionic gonadotropin
Preferred by Steroid users at the end of a cycle
Why they risk it They feel like less of a man



When the male body is flooded with synthetic testosterone, the testes stop producing the natural version. Once the faucet is turned off, that leaves a deficit of the all-purpose hormone. Solution: HCG, a female fertility drug that jump-starts natural testosterone production. When Manny Ramirez was found to be in possession of HCG, MLB asked him to sit for 50 games and contemplate his misdeed.

Most Popular Buffet Table Companion

Metformin Hydrochloride (nb)

Also known as Glumetza
Preferred by Carbo loaders
Why they risk it They need to add weight, fast



When Coach orders you to bulk up, the problem isn't just the time and focus it takes to down six triple-fudge sundaes, it's also getting the body to absorb that large influx of calories efficiently when you do. Glumetza, which improves blood sugar control in adults with Type 2 diabetes, makes sure the glucose gets into muscles, not fat cells.

Most Likely to Land a Swimmer in Hot Water

Long-Acting Beta, Adrenergic Agonist (b)

Also known as Clenbuterol, Bute
Preferred by Asthmatics, swimmers
Why they risk it Oxygen deficits get an athlete down



Clenbuterol, a stimulant, is a favorite of bodybuilders because it burns fat, which in turn accentuates muscle definition. It also opens constricted airways, making it a favorite of swimmers and endurance athletes who need extra O₂. While illegal in the U.S., athletes with asthma can get therapeutic-use exemptions that permit them to take related meds that work similar magic.

Quickest Disappearing Act

Topical Testosterone (b)

Also known as AndroGel, Testim
Preferred by Juicers on their way to training camp
Why they risk it The testers are on their way

Many steroids linger in the system for weeks, but this topical gel disappears from the body within days. That makes it ideal for athletes who have been forced to taper off longer-lasting steroids because they fear a drug test is imminent (say, when they're about to report to training camp). AndroGel gets the job done, providing fast results and an even absorption rate.



Most Addictive Painkiller

Fentanyl (cb)

Also known as Apache, Dance Fever, Goodfella
Preferred by Druggies
Why they risk it Two words: They shouldn't



In 1990, this synthetic opiate was approved by the FDA for painkiller-resistant patients. But a dangerous underground market has developed among bodybuilders who use it to blunt the sting of extreme workouts. In 2005, fentanyl contributed to 120 deaths, and the FDA said it "continued to receive reports of death and life-threatening side effects after doctors have inappropriately prescribed" the drug.

Most, Like, Wow, Man

PaperBol (b)

Also known as PaperStrol, PaperVar, PaperDrol
Preferred by Smugglers
Why they risk it U.S. Customs is no picnic



Stepped-up law enforcement has made it riskier than ever to order illegal steroids by mail, so creative juicers have taken a page out of the Woodstock playbook. By soaking sheets of rice paper in anabolics, then cutting them into small squares, overseas pharmacies are creating "blotter steroids." Remember, though, putting drugs on paper doesn't make them any more legal.

Most Likely to Be Taken to the Mat

Furosemide (b)

Also known as Lasix
Preferred by Horses, gymnasts
Why they risk it They feel like a cow



Since trainers discovered in the 1970s that this diuretic helps stem nosebleeds in racehorses, it has been a staple of veterinary pharmacies. But these days it winds up around other horses as well. Furosemide is a favorite of gymnasts looking to shed water weight. Beefy bodybuilders like it too, as a way to relieve unsightly water gain before comps.

The Mother of All Muscle Builders

Testosterone (b)

Also known as T, Test
Preferred by Pros, Joes
Why they risk it They want to feel 23 again

Testosterone is a gym favorite because it spurs muscle growth while shortening workout recovery time. After Floyd Landis won the 2006 Tour de France, testers found 11 times as much testosterone as epitestosterone in his system. The norm is a 1:1 ratio. When Landis claimed the level was all natural, a WADA official quipped, "You'd think he'd be violating every virgin within 100 miles."



Most Likely to Help Baldy Medal, Part 1

Minoxidil (nb)

Also known as Rogaine
Preferred by Men with comb-overs
Why they risk it Steroids stress a guy out



Rogaine is sold in pharmacies as a treatment for male-pattern baldness, but it was originally developed as a cure for hypertension. And that just happens to be a common side effect of steroid use. Problem is, a lushly maned pro will have a hard time explaining the minoxidil in his locker to the authorities who view it as an indicator of PED use.

Most Likely to Have Four-Hour Side Effects

Sildenafil Citrate (nb)

Also known as Viagra
Preferred by "Endurance" athletes
Why they risk it They're gasping for air

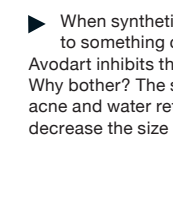


By helping blood vessels dilate, the little blue pill does more than fix erectile dysfunction. A 2006 study found it also helped cyclists who got winded at high altitudes, by shuttling extra O₂ through the bloodstream. Whether it works at sea level has yet to be determined, but WADA is on the case. A ban may be imminent.

Most Likely to Zap Bacne

Dutasteride (nb)

Also known as Avodart
Preferred by Discreet juicers
Why they risk it Acne is giving them away



When synthetic testosterone metabolizes, it converts to something called DHT (dihydrotestosterone). Avodart inhibits the enzyme that leads to that conversion. Why bother? The side effects of DHT include baldness, acne and water retention. Another plus: Dutasteride will decrease the size of your enlarged prostate, too.



Most Popular for Getting Through the Dog Days

Methylphenidate (cb)

Also known as Ritalin
Preferred by Sluggers on another long road trip
Why they risk it Sometimes coffee and Red Bull don't cut it



Sure, your kid sister uses Ritalin to help her ace algebra. Athletes who need to be "in the zone" dig it too. The attention-deficit drug alters chemicals in the brain that control focus, so (not surprisingly) after MLB banned stimulants, in 2006, requests for therapeutic-use exemptions for Ritalin quadrupled.

Most Popular Mixer

HGH (b)

Also known as Human growth hormone, somatotropin
Preferred by Olympians, cyclists, sluggers, linemen ... you get the idea
Why they risk it There's no risk; it's undetectable in urine tests



If you ran a bar that served PEDs, HGH would be your tonic; it goes with everything. When combined with steroids, HGH accelerates muscle-building by increasing production of insulin growth factor. Pair it with thyroid hormone, and it speeds metabolism. Chinese versions, like hygetropin, which are cheaper than U.S. products, fuel a thriving black market.

Most Popular Way to Keep Guys Out of a C-Cup

Letrozole (b)

Also known as Femara
Preferred by Male jocks who are starting to look like female jocks
Why they risk it They're shopping at Victoria's Secret—for themselves



In what may go down as the most surreal week of the steroids era, the authors of books about A-Rod and Roger Clemens broke dueling stories about how their subjects developed gynecomastia—enlarged breasts—while allegedly on the juice. If only they'd taken Femara, an anticancer, estrogen-inhibiting drug for post-menopausal women, we'd all have been spared that horrific image.

Most Popular Alternative to a Crash Diet

Liothyronine (nb)

Also known as Cytomel
Preferred by Sprinters, bodybuilders
Why they risk it Well, it has the BALCO seal of approval



This is a synthetic version of the naturally produced thyroid hormone T₃, which controls metabolism. Doping gurus give it to their clients in six-week cycles to help them lose fat and build lean muscle mass. But as BALCO client Dwain Chambers showed, sprinters can take a pair of 25-mcg tablets before a race to get a rush too. Note: For best results, it's often combined with HGH.

Most Likely to Appear in an Off-Season Getaway

Tri-Test (b)

Also known as Tri-Test 300
Preferred by Couch potatoes
Why they risk it There is no testing when the Games end



This steroid blend combines fast-, medium- and long-acting versions of synthetic testosterone, making it a favorite of juicers who want to get back into the swing gradually after a lazy off-season. The fast-acting stuff hits first; five days later the medium- and long-acting portions kick in. With a ramp-up of three weeks, it's ideal for athletes whose leagues have no off-season drug-testing policy (NHL) or a weak one (MLB).