

The cost of being extremely swole: The pros and cons of anabolic steroids

December 21 2022, by Lizzie Thelwell



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Brian Johnson, also known as the [Liver King](#), was recently [forced to admit](#) to using steroids after a fellow social media influencer leaked some emails detailing the volume of steroids taken by the Liver King.

Throughout his rise on [social media](#), the Liver King based his brand on the claim that he was able to attain his outrageously jacked physique through natural means.

The 44-year-old influencer credited his physique to a daily regime based on eating raw organ meat like [liver](#) and bull's testicles, working out intensely and taking Ancestral Supplements—his own brand of dietary supplements.

The \$11,000 worth of steroids he allegedly used every single month were never mentioned until recently.

But the reveal did not surprise Dr. Krissy Kendall, Lecturer in Exercise and Sports Science at ECU.

"I've spent a lot of time around bodybuilders, and there's no way the Liver King's body was achieved without steroids," says Krissy.

"Steroids provide instant gratification—you get results really quickly.

"But in your life, you get one body, and the damage steroids cause is not worth it in the long run."

Arnolds, gear, gym candy, juice, pumpers, roids, stackers ... what exactly are steroids?

There are many different types of performance-enhancing drugs out there. The term "steroids" is largely used to describe [anabolic androgenic steroids](#), which are synthetic versions of testosterone.

Testosterone is a hormone that is [mainly produced in either the testicles or ovaries](#). Naturally, males produce much higher levels of testosterone.

Steroids have [two types of effects on the body](#). The anabolic component is related to higher bone density, faster recovery from injury and increase in muscle growth. The androgenic component (also known as "masculinizing") is related to developing and maintaining the body's male characteristics such as higher muscle mass, a deep voice and body hair.

Scientists [first isolated and synthesized testosterone in 1935](#) and used it to treat depression. Its misuse started at the 1954 Olympics when Russian weightlifters were given testosterone to enhance their performance.

Steroid use became more widespread in the 1980s, with young men using it to enhance their physical appearance.

How do people misuse steroids?

Steroids are taken in the form of tablets, gels or liquid injections. And despite a lack of [scientific evidence](#), there are [three different methods](#) used by people in hopes of reaping the benefits without any negatives.

"Stacking" refers to when you take different types of steroids together to maximize benefits.

"Cycling" refers to when steroids are used periodically with breaks in between.

Finally, there's "pyramiding," which refers to when users start with a low dose and gradually increase to a maximum dose in attempts.

None of the above are backed by scientific evidence.

What are the unwanted side effects?

The misuse of anabolic steroids has a long list of [side effects](#) as they affect multiple systems and organs.

Short-term use can cause sleeping problems, irritability, [mood swings](#) or aggression, changes in sex drive, acne, shrunken testicles, decreased sperm production, breast development and more.

"Prolonged use of steroids at high doses has nasty consequences and puts the heart, liver and kidneys under an enormous amount of stress," says Krissy.

You can also add depression, stunted growth and premature bone and skin aging to the list of downsides.

Is it possible to use steroids safely?

You can use them legally and safely if they are prescribed by a doctor for medical reasons. Steroids are prescribed for conditions such as low levels of testosterone, delayed puberty in males, post-menopause issues, breast cancer, anemia or muscle loss due to cancer or AIDS.

As it's illegal to use steroids for muscle building and boosting athletic performance, it's a dangerous game.

"You have to obtain them illegally, so you don't know where they are coming from or what's in them," says Krissy.

"It's incredibly risky."

So, what now for the Liver King?

In a 6-minute long YouTube video, the Liver King expressed his remorse and announced that, from now on, he will live without steroids. So what will that mean for his physique?

According to Krissy, when you start taking steroids, your body stops making its own supply. So he'll need to cycle off his current steroids and start another one to help him make his own natural hormones. He'll then be able to come off them altogether.

"He definitely won't be as big, as there is no way to maintain that size without [steroids](#)," says Krissy.

"But for his followers, it's good to remember that you can attain amazing results naturally with proper nutrition and training and be proud that you achieved them with hard work and discipline."

This article first appeared on [Particle](#), a science news website based at Scitech, Perth, Australia. Read the [original article](#).

Provided by Particle

Citation: The cost of being extremely swole: The pros and cons of anabolic steroids (2022, December 21) retrieved 24 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-12-extremely-swole-pros-cons-anabolic.html>

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