

Doctor: OK, so hi my name's Elliot I'm one of the doctors how can I help you today.

Patient: Yeah. So over the past couple of months, I've noticed I've get some palpitations. They seem to be getting worse, it's not there all the time. It feels like my heart's racing and I have noticed it after I have had some coffee though.

Doctor: OK, and are you short of breath when this happens.

Patient: No, no no

Doctor: OK. And have you noticed it at certain times of the day

Patient: No, not really

Doctor: OK well, palpitations are quite common in the population especially if you're having less sleep, more caffeine, more stress, but also can be due to other factors which we need to exclude.

Doctor: Do you feel like any of that applies to you?

Patient: Yeah, I've noticed it more with coffee and when I take a pre work out drink, do other drugs cause this?

Doctor: So you attend the gym regularly and I can see you developed a lot of muscle. Some people, especially men, use a variety of both over the counter supplements as well as drugs we call image and performance enhancing drugs such as anabolic steroids or growth hormone. This is pretty common. Is this something that applies to you?

Patient: Um

Doctor: If you've been taking these it is quite helpful to know as you might benefit from some extra health monitoring.

Patient: Well I, I take sort of gym supplements, over the counter and also in the last couple of weeks, I've been taking Testroval.

Doctor: OK, thanks for sharing that with me. I'm not sure on some of the branding used is that a form of injectable testosterone.

Patient: Yeah

Doctor: OK. And how long have you used that for?

Patient: Just a couple of months.

Doctor: OK, and is this is your first time taking this?

Patient: No, no. I've used it before couple of years back. Yeah.

Doctor: OK did you have any side effects?

Patient: I had some quite bad acne, but nothing too severe no.

Doctor: And are you injecting safely, where do you get your needles from.

Patient: So I get my needles from a needle exchange and I followed a guide on YouTube which taught nurses how to inject safely. So yeah, I think I've been quite safe.

Doctor: OK. And are you aware of the negative side effects of anabolic steroids themselves?

Patient: Yeah, so I know it can cause some liver problems and some kidney issues, and it can make your blood a little bit thicker as well can't it?

Doctor: That's right yeah it can affect your liver and kidneys negatively, increase the number of red blood cells in your blood, which can increase your risk of clots, which could lead to strokes for example. Infertility is also possible. Did you know it could also affect your cholesterol leading to early thickening of your arteries which could lead to heart attacks and strokes at a young age.

Patient: No, no that sounds a little bit more severe.

Doctor: Have you ever thought about stopping the steroids?

Patient: See, the thing is, Doc I can't, I'm a bouncer and well, you know, all the guys are already on anabolic steroids. And if there's a fight, you know, I've got to look after them. I've got to be fit or at least look like I'm fit and I just can't stop.

Doctor: I understand. Sounds like there's a lot of pressure. Well, perhaps instead we can look at your liver, kidneys, red blood cells and cholesterol as well as your heart when we look into this issue of palpitations, the palpitations may or may not be linked to using the steroids, can arrange for some blood tests and ECG to look at palpitations.

Now that I know about the steroids I can look to see if they might be causing any of the negative things too. Obviously our medical advice is that you don't take steroids at all, but if you feel you can't stop steroids

due to issues around work, then maybe we can keep a more careful eye on your health going forward.

Patient: Alright cheers doc I mean that means a lot, not many sort of medical people, you know, they don't understand this stuff.

Doctor: This is what we call harm reduction. So we'll try to reduce the negative consequences through non-judgemental support and guidance. If you arrange the blood test and ECG with the receptionist then perhaps we can talk again through a telephone consultation and chat about the results.

Patient: That'll be fantastic. Thank you ever so much.

Doctor: no worries.