

## TEEN ANABOLIC STEROID USE

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3.4% of high school seniors and 1.9% of eighth graders report use of anabolic steroids. Anabolic steroids are not the same as corticosteroids, such as prednisone. If you have a child, grandchild or other loved one that participates in sports, please take the time to review the following.

Athletes taking anabolic steroids are seeking a way to gain an advantage over their opponents and take a short-cut to becoming bigger and stronger. The primary sports where anabolic steroids are used include the strength sports of wrestling, baseball and football, the endurance sports of track and field and swimming and any sport involving weight training or bodybuilding.

Anabolic steroids can cause many health related problems, which may not be noticed until it is too late, including liver tumors and cancer, jaundice, fluid retention, high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, blood clots, increased LDL/bad cholesterol, decreased HDL/good cholesterol, kidney tumors, severe acne, diarrhea, headaches, aching joints, muscle cramps, nausea and vomiting, sleep problems, increased risk of ligament and tendon injuries and trembling. Also, persons who inject anabolic steroids run a risk of contracting HIV/AIDS or hepatitis.

“Roid rage” which is severe, aggressive behavior may result in violence, such as fighting or destruction of property and psychiatric side effects can also occur. A person can experience extreme mood swings, including manic symptoms which can lead to violence. Users may also experience paranoia, extreme irritability, hallucinations, anxiety and panic attacks, and impaired judgment stemming from feelings of being invincible. Depression and thoughts of suicide is also seen when anabolic steroids are stopped and may contribute to dependence on the drugs.

In men anabolic steroids may cause shrinking of the testicles, reduced sperm count, infertility, baldness, increase in breast and nipple size, and increased prostate cancer risk.

In women anabolic steroids may cause growth of facial hair, male-pattern baldness, reduced breast size, menstrual problems, enlarged clitoris and deepened voice.

In adolescents anabolic steroids may cause growth to halt prematurely due to premature skeletal maturation and accelerated puberty changes. Adolescents who use anabolic steroids are also more likely to use other addictive drugs and alcohol.

Although Creatine and androstenedione are not anabolic steroids, they may be unsafe, and they are not regulated by the FDA. There is no replacement for a healthy diet, proper training and practice. Successful athletes rely on practice and hard work to increase their skill, speed, power and ability. Anabolic steroids cannot improve an athletes agility or skill. Factors such as genetics, body size, age, sex, diet and how hard the athlete trains determines the athletes ability.

Research for this article was obtained with the assistance of the American Academy of Pediatrics at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) and the National Institute on Drug Abuse at [www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov).