

Anabolic Steroids

What are anabolic steroids?

Anabolic steroids are man-made (synthetic) drugs that are similar to the male hormone testosterone. Anabolic means to "build up." These drugs increase the body's ability to make proteins and build them into muscle tissue. They are also called anabolic-androgenic steroids. Androgenic means that the features of the male body are enhanced.

Anabolic steroids are not legal in organized sports. The International Olympic Committee (IOC), National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), and many professional sports ban steroids and regularly test athletes for them. Athletes who test positive for steroids will be suspended or disqualified. They may lose the chance to compete in their sport.

Anabolic steroids can help athletes gain size and strength, but not without a price. Not only is it illegal to take steroids without a prescription, the side effects can be quite serious.

What are steroids used for?

Doctors sometimes prescribe steroids to:

- ▶ treat men who can't make enough testosterone naturally
- ▶ increase weight gain in people with certain problems or disorders (such as AIDS).

Use by athletes to build muscle mass is not recommended.

Are steroids available without a prescription?

No. Steroids are only legal in the US if you have a doctor's prescription. Many people buy steroids on the black market without a doctor's prescription. This is illegal, but unfortunately, quite common.

How are they used?

Most steroids are injected. Some steroids may be taken by mouth. Combined with a high protein diet, anabolic steroids will increase muscle mass and body weight.

What are the side effects?

Anabolic steroids have many harmful side effects that affect many parts of the body. Side effects of steroids include:

- ▶ tears of muscles and tendons
- ▶ acne
- ▶ liver damage
- ▶ increased cholesterol levels
- ▶ mood swings and aggressive behavior (sometimes called, "roid rage").

In women, steroids may also cause:

- ▶ deepening of the voice
- ▶ significant enlargement of the clitoris
- ▶ hair loss (on the head)
- ▶ facial hair growth
- ▶ female hormone problems.

In men, steroids cause a decrease in natural testosterone production that may lead to:

- ▶ shrinkage in the size of testicles
- ▶ loss of the ability to get erections
- ▶ a decreased sperm count
- ▶ increase in breast size (called gynecomastia).

In teenagers, steroids can cause their bones to stop growing too early.

Unfortunately many people using steroids do not know about the side effects or think that the side effects will not happen to them.