

11. Anabolic Steroids

(2021 version)

Contents	Page No.
Introduction	2
How They Are Taken	2
Health	3
The Law	5
Quotes	5
Anabolic Steroids statistics	6

Introduction

Anabolic steroids are produced naturally in the body by the male and female sex organs, the adrenal cortex and the placenta. The hormones in the male, including testosterone, affect the body in two particular ways:

- Anabolic effects - They assist the development of muscle tissue, which results in a 'building up' of the body.
- Androgenic effects - The hormones are responsible for the growth and functioning of the male sex organs and the 'masculinising' or 'virilising' effects of male development.

The hormones vary in these effects. The majority of synthetic anabolic steroids are derived from the basic steroid structure of naturally occurring testosterone. Although manufacturers make efforts to increase the anabolic and reduce the androgenic effects, synthetic anabolic steroids have some virilising side effects.

Use of performance enhancing drugs has been happening since the Olympic Games began in ancient Greece, but the first use of anabolic steroids by athletes began in the mid 1950s and became widespread by the 1960s. They were then banned in 1970 by the International Olympic Committee but their use continued into the 1980s when drug testing was introduced as steroid use had become a big problem.

How They Are Taken

Anabolic steroids come in tablet or capsule form to be taken orally, or in liquid form to be injected.

Street names include 'Roids' and various names derived from the brand names.

They have limited medical uses in the following areas:

- treatment of persistent anaemia where red blood cells are unable to regenerate.
- supplementary treatment of breast cancer where the disease has spread to a secondary site.
- in the treatment of thrombosis and other vascular disorders.
- to assist protein build up in those weakened after surgery or through long term confinement.
- as a replacement therapy in men deficient in the naturally occurring male hormones.



Sportsmen and women from a wide variety of sports take steroids in the belief that they will make them stronger, faster, more aggressive and competitive, and will allow them to train harder and recover more quickly.

Health

Anabolic steroids, when combined with intensive training and a high protein diet, can help build body weight and increase the size of muscles. Other reasons for use include to get fitter, faster and improve endurance.

Although steroids are taken for their long-term effects, in the short term they often make users feel more aggressive and competitive and better able to perform strenuous physical activity. Probably because of how they feel, users of steroids can behave in an aggressive, even violent, manner and are often more competitive than usual.

It is hard to classify anabolic steroids as one particular type of drug.

The following effects could be described as stimulant:

- Paranoia
- Irritability
- Aggression ('roid rage')
- Violence
- Raised blood pressure (but not heart rate)
- Building muscle

However, the effects in the list below could be seen as depressant effects. They are related to the suppression of the user's natural sex hormones:

In men:

- Reduced sperm count
- Infertility
- Shrunken testicles
- Erectile dysfunction
- Baldness
- Gynaecomastia (formation of breast tissue)
- Increased risk of prostate cancer
- Severe acne

These are the consequence of the suppression of the normal testosterone production by the testicles and of using levels of testosterone higher than those naturally produced.

And in women:

- Facial and body hair growth
- Swelling of the clitoris
- Loss of breast tissue
- Deepened voice
- Reduced sex drive
- Problems with periods, including stopping
- Reduced fertility
- Baldness

- Severe acne

These are the consequence of the suppression of the normal production of oestrogen and progesterone made by the ovaries and of using testosterone which is a male sex hormone. Women do produce and need very low levels of testosterone but when used recreationally much higher doses are used.

In young men (late teens/early 20s), because they have not finished growing, the following effects are seen:

- stunted growth
- premature balding
- acne scarring
- stretch marks on chest and arms
- prematurely-aged, 'leathery' skin
- injuries from excessively intense gym workouts

Often, steroids are not classified at all, so there isn't a properly defined 'correct' classification.

There are also numerous side effects from prolonged use of steroids:

- High blood pressure and cholesterol levels leading to heart disease, stroke, blood clots, liver damage including jaundice, tumours, bleeding into the liver and liver failure.
- Increased aggression and physical violence ('roid rage') and sexual abuse.
- Increased sexual appetite has been reported in both men and women.
- Use can cause stunting of growth. This in turn can distort the body causing spinal problems.
- The body's defences against physical stress and overexertion are also suppressed by the drug, resulting in overheating or extreme fatigue. This condition, as well as an overdose of steroids, has proved fatal.
- If users share equipment for the injecting of steroids, then there is a risk of contracting HIV or other blood-borne infections like hepatitis.
- They can also cause long-term effects to the mental health of the user. There have been some reports of temporary psychiatric problems associated with anabolic steroids, which appear to cease when the drug use is stopped. These effects include confusion, sleep disorder, depression, hallucinations, paranoia, delusions of grandeur and reference (believing you are somebody else). The defence of 'steroid insanity' has been used recently in courts both in the UK and USA on behalf of those accused of crimes of violence.

Steroids and pregnancy

Steroid use may seriously damage the unborn child, particularly during early pregnancy.

Dependence

Anabolic steroids are not thought to have a risk of physical dependence but some users become psychologically dependent on them, believing that their level of physical and sporting performance will drop without them. Although there are no withdrawal symptoms, users say that they lack energy and feel depressed when they stop taking them.

The Law

Anabolic steroids are a Class C, Schedule 4 drug. In December 2009, a further 'batch' of anabolic steroids was designated class C drugs.

Quotes

Last

The overwhelming majority of athletes I know would do anything and take anything short of killing themselves to improve athletic performance.
(Harold Connolly, 1956 Olympic hammer gold medallist)

Anabolic Steroids Statistics

updated

You simply can't pretend that testing is working; it isn't. The cheats will always be one step ahead.
(Steve Ovett)

We shan't know if we're watching an athlete with the body that God gave him - or the product of a laboratory.
(Sir Arthur Gold, Chairman of the British Olympic Association)

The worst thing for Ben Johnson is that he will never know how good he really was.
(Andy Higgins, President of the Canadian Association of National Coaches)

December
2020

[Use of anabolic steroids](#)

0.1% of adults aged 16-59 have reported using anabolic steroids in the last year, and 0.3% of young people aged 16-24 have also reported using them in the last year.

Ten years ago, 0.2% of 16-59-year-olds reported having used anabolic steroids in the last year and 0.3% of 16-24-year-olds said they had used them in the last year.

(ONS Drug Misuse in England and Wales, 2019/20; British Crime Survey 2010/11)