

Anabolic Steroids Fact Sheet

Overview/Description

Anabolic-androgenic steroids are man-made substances related to male sex hormones. “Anabolic” refers to muscle-building, and “androgenic” refers to increased masculine characteristics.

- These drugs are available legally only by prescription to treat medical conditions
- Abuse of anabolic steroids can lead to serious health problems, some irreversible.
- Today, athletes and others abuse anabolic steroids to enhance performance and also to improve physical appearance.
- Anabolic steroids are taken orally or injected, typically in cycles of weeks or months (referred to as “cycling”), rather than continuously. Cycling involves taking multiple doses of steroids over a specific period of time, stopping for a period, and starting again.
- In addition, users often combine several different types of steroids to maximize their effectiveness while minimizing negative effects (referred to as “stacking”).

Short-Term Effects

The major side effects from abusing anabolic steroids can include:

- liver tumors, kidney tumors and cancer,
- Jaundice, severe acne, trembling
- fluid retention, high blood pressure, fluctuations in cholesterol levels.
- Gender-specific side effects include:
 - For men - shrinking of the testicles, reduced sperm count, infertility, baldness, development of breasts, increased risk for prostate cancer.
 - For women-growth of facial hair, male-pattern baldness, changes in or cessation of the menstrual cycle, enlargement of the clitoris, deepened voice.
 - For adolescents-growth halted prematurely through premature skeletal maturation and accelerated puberty changes. This means that adolescents risk remaining short for the remainder of their lives if they take anabolic steroids

Long-Term Effects

- Risk of contracting or HIV/AIDS or hepatitis if injecting
- Aggression, extreme mood swings also can occur, including manic-like symptoms leading to violence
- Paranoid jealousy, extreme irritability, delusions, and impaired judgment
- Memory loss, difficulties with speech and thinking,

Dependence Potential

- Can develop *tolerance* (needing more of the drug in order to get the same effect)
- Can develop *psychological* and *physical* dependence.

Withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms may include:

- Anxiety, anger, irritability,
- Depression