

What are steroids?

Steroids, the popular name for synthetic (man-made) substances related to the male sex hormones, promote muscle growth and the development of male sexual characteristics. Steroids are legally available only with a prescription. They are prescribed to treat conditions such as delayed puberty, some types of impotence, and body-wasting in patients suffering from AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). Steroids are abused, often by athletes, to enhance athletic performance and to improve physical appearance.

What do steroids look like?

Steroids are available in tablet, liquid, gel, and cream form. The appearance of these products varies depending upon the type and the manufacturer.

How are steroids abused?

Users typically ingest steroids orally, inject them intramuscularly, or rub them on their skin. Individuals who abuse steroids may take doses that are 10 to 100 times higher than those used for medical conditions.

Steroid abusers often take two or more different forms of the drug and mix oral steroids with injectable steroids, a process known as stacking. Abusers also frequently administer their doses in cycles of 6 to 12 weeks, a process called pyramiding.

Steroid abusers believe that stacking and pyramiding enhance the benefits of the drug while lessening the toll that drug use takes on their bodies; however, there is no scientific evidence to support these theories.

Who abuses steroids?

Individuals of various ages abuse steroids; however, it is difficult to quantify the extent of steroid abuse in the United States because many data sources that measure drug use exclude steroids. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that estimates of the number of individuals 18 and older who abuse steroids is in the hundreds of thousands. In general, steroid abuse is higher among men than women; however, steroid abuse is growing most rapidly among young women.

Steroid abuse among high school students is a particular problem. Four percent of high school seniors in the United States abused steroids at least once in their lifetime, and 1.4 percent abused steroids in the past month, according to the University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future Survey.

What are the risks?

Steroid abuse is associated with a range of physical and emotional problems. Physical consequences include liver tumors and cancer, jaundice, high blood pressure and increases in cholesterol levels, kidney tumors, fluid retention, and severe acne. Men may experience shrinking of the testicles, reduced

sperm count, infertility, baldness, breast development, and increased risk of prostate cancer. Women may experience growth of facial hair, male-pattern baldness, changes or cessation in menstrual cycle, and deepening of the voice. Individuals who are still growing (adolescents) risk prematurely halting their growth because of early skeletal maturation and acceleration of puberty.

Emotional problems associated with steroid use include dramatic mood swings (including manic symptoms that can lead to violence called roid rage), depression, paranoid jealousy, extreme irritability, delusions, and impaired judgment.

In addition to the risks directly associated with steroid abuse, individuals who inject the drugs expose themselves to the risk of needle-borne diseases, including HIV (human immunodeficiency virus), hepatitis B and C, and other blood-borne viruses.

Street Terms for Steroids

Arnolds
Gym candy
Juice
Pumpers
Stackers
Weight trainers



DEA

Is abusing steroids illegal?

Yes, it is illegal to use steroids without a valid prescription or to distribute them. Steroids are Schedule III substances under the Controlled Substances Act. Schedule III drugs, which have a legitimate medical function, may lead to moderate to low physical dependence or high psychological dependence.

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