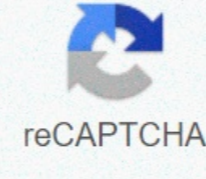




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## The truth about steroids the dark side of bodybuilding

Aaron Henry was 13 years old when he started taking steroids. He wanted to get a head start in football. After four years of using steroids, Henry was 5'9 and weighed 210 pounds. He gained weight and strength from taking steroids, but that's not all they gave him. He experienced spells of vomiting, urinating blood, liver and kidney damage, ulceration over three-quarters of his stomach, a mild heart attack, and an aggressive personality.<sup>5</sup> Henry was only aware of steroids' positive effects. He was unaware of their side effects and health risks. Much of the public, like Henry, has not been informed or misinformed about steroids. The media failed to show the negative aspects of steroid use. Because of this, many people think that steroids only have positive effects, but they don't realize those using steroids can destroy their body and mind. Who uses steroids? The public is under the belief that taking steroids will automatically make the user be built and muscular, which is not so. While using steroids, the user should still exercise. Some people also believe that the only way to achieve a muscular build is by using steroids, again, this is wrong. Many people who work hard achieve an excellent physique of course. Male bodybuilders and athletes make up most of the steroid users in the US, female athletes and teenage athletes use steroids as well. One of the most famous steroid users is Arnold Schwarzenegger. Schwarzenegger holds the title of Mr. Universe and Mr. Olympia. He used steroids before the health risks were known and before they were illegal. Another famous steroid user is Sergio Oliva. Oliva was also a bodybuilder and competed against Schwarzenegger. Both men no longer use steroids. They realized that their health was more important than rapid muscle growth. What are steroids? The definition of steroids is, man-made derivatives of testosterone, the male hormone. They synthesize protein and help promote muscle growth.<sup>4</sup> Types of steroids include anabolic and growth hormones. The definition of an anabolic steroid is, any drug or harmful substance, chemically and pharmacologically related to testosterone (other than estrogen, progesterone, and corticosteroids) that promotes muscle growth, a drug or hormonal substance that stimulates the endogenous production of steroids in the human body that works in the same way.<sup>2</sup> Types of anabolic steroids include oral and intramuscular injection. Steroids taken orally have a half-life time of several hours, while injected steroids have a half-life time of several days.<sup>2</sup> Steroids taken orally usually come on the of a pill. It takes these water-soluble pills three to four weeks to clear the body. The oil-based injections take six to eight months to leave the body.<sup>1</sup> After steroids are taken, the steroid molecule bonds to cell receptor sites. Now the steroid molecule can increase protein increase increase nitrogen retention, make metabolic changes, and increase the size and strength of skeletal muscle cells. These all lead to bigger and stronger muscles.<sup>2</sup> Some names of popular steroids are Nelvar, Deca-Durabolin, Anavar, Winstrol, Stanozolol, Dianabol, and Anadrol-50.<sup>7</sup> Steroids cost as much as \$100 to \$500 per dosage. Some steroid users take more than one dosage per day.<sup>4</sup> History of steroids steroids have been used for years for medical treatment. They were developed in the 1930s to prevent the atrophy or break-down, of muscle, in patients with debilitating diseases. They were also given to patients who had been severely burned. The first non-medical use of steroids was during World War II. Nazi doctors gave steroids to their soldiers in an attempt to make them more aggressive. The Soviet Union then decided to give steroids to their athletes. Once the U.S. learned secretly from the Soviet Union, they also started giving steroids to their athletes, starting in the 1950s. It wasn't until the 1960s that steroid side effects were first documented.<sup>8</sup> In 1988, the U.S. passed the Anti-Drug Abuse Act. This year was called the Year of Steroids because so many Olympic athletes were caught using steroids.<sup>6</sup> It was estimated that one to three million average Americans were currently using steroids as well.<sup>8</sup> Health Risks Many serious side effects and health risks are involved in steroid use. Early symptoms of steroid abuse include severe cystic acne, significant, sudden increase in body weight, headache, dizziness, severe leg and abdominal cramps, and premature hair loss.<sup>1</sup> The whole body is affected by steroid use. Health risks involving the cardiovascular system include cholesterol modifications, heart disease, anaphylactic shock, high blood pressure, septic shock, and even death. Effects on the reproductive system include, genital atrophy, genital swelling, sexual dysfunction, sterility, impotence, prostate enlargement, fetal damage, and menstrual irregularities. The liver and kidneys are constantly attacked by steroids. Effects on the liver include cancer, jaundice, tumors, and Pelosi's hepatitis. Damage to kidneys includes, kidney stones, kidney disease, and kidney failures. Taking steroids can also affect your skin. Acne, oily skin, rashes, purple or red spots on the body, hives, increased body hair, baldness, and increased facial hair in women. Other side effects include edema bone pain, nausea, chills, diarrhea, insomnia, deepening of the voice, and changes in bowel and urinary habits. Steroids can also affect the user psychologically. They become depressed, aggressive and very hostile.<sup>3,8</sup> Some athletes are so aggressive that they should use tranquilizers when they are not competing to deal with their hostility.<sup>5</sup> Teens and steroids The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) reports that 12 percent of teenage boys and two half a percent of teenage girls use steroids. This is troubling because health risks and side effects are much more serious for teens than adults. This is because a teenager's body is not fully developed, therefore their growth can be stunted and parts of the body never have a chance to mature. The effects on women are even worse since androgens and testosterone are more foreign to their bodies than men.<sup>2</sup> A very serious problem is the fact that teens who use steroids for two to three months face dying in their 30's or 40's. Taking steroids is very difficult for teens psychologically. Many teen steroid users have what is called, Roid Mania. This includes wild aggression and delusions.<sup>8</sup> The two main reasons why teens use steroids are, sports and appearance. Teenagers feel like they are taking steroids, they can improve their athletic ability and hopefully get them into college sports. Appearance is very important for teenagers. Greg Voigt, a food store owner, comments, Of every 100 kids who come here, 70 want to know what kind of effects steroids will have on their bodies. The other 30 just want them. <sup>1</sup> Steroids seem to be a relatively easy way teens to improve their appearance. They take steroids to help them gain popularity among colleagues. Steroids and law steroids are considered a Schedule III Substance. A Schedule III Substance is a drug or other substance that is an accepted medical treatment in the United States, which when abused, can also lead to physical and psychological dependence. Other Schedule III substances include amphetamines and barbiturates.<sup>4</sup> The use or possession of steroids can put a person in some very deep trouble. For simple possession of steroids is the punishment, up to one year in prison, and a minimum fine of \$1,000. A person with a previous conviction of simple possession can receive up to two years in prison and a minimum fine of \$2,500. Someone with two or more convictions of simple possession can receive 90 days to three years in prison and a minimum fine of \$5,000. A person convicted of selling steroids faces up to five years in prison, a \$250,000 fine, and at least two years of supervised release. A person convicted of selling steroids during this supervised release faces up to ten years in prison, increased fines, and an additional four years of parole.<sup>2</sup> Under state law, each person with or under the influence of steroids faces prison terms of one to six years and fines of up to \$5,000. These laws do not apply to emaciated patients who need to gain weight, children who gain weight, and Anemia.<sup>1</sup> The problem is, 99 percent of bodybuilders using steroids know how to mask it, therefore they are not caught.<sup>4</sup> Quotes from former steroid users Greg Conigliaro, a former steroid user, face serious health problems due to his steroid use. I was mentally destroyed as much as I was. I, conigliaro says. Some doctors try to agree that steroids are not addictive, but Conigliaro thinks otherwise. It's like being an alcoholic. It's a habit you'll have for the rest of your life. I think steroids are addictive, if not more so, than any recreational drug out there. <sup>4</sup> Because of his steroid use, Conigliaro had to get back surgery due to three ruptured discs, has heart problems, and has high blood pressure.<sup>4</sup> Taking steroids put a real road block in Conigliaro's life. His experience shows that steroids are just as bad as any other drug out there. Steve Karr's, former steroid user, health was also damaged from taking steroids. Karr's liver and kidneys are damaged, he developed jaundice, is short of breath, has pale skin and is often nauseous.<sup>4</sup> These effects came from a drug that is supposed to improve your health. Steve Courson was an avid steroid stacker, someone who uses more than one type of steroid at a time. He used 300 mg of Deca-Durabolin in two weeks, doctors recommend only 50-100 mg per month. He also took 50 mg winstrol per day, a maximum of 6 mg is recommended. On top of that he took 50 mg of Anavar per day, the recommended dose is 5-10 mg.<sup>7</sup> Initially, Steve made quality gains. He needs a heart donor. Conclusion The health risks surrounding steroids heavily outweigh the few benefits. Steroids are harmful physically and psychologically. Using steroids is even more dangerous for teens because their bodies are not fully matured. Teens also face dying in their 30's or 40's due to steroid use. Steroids may seem like the best and easiest way to improve your body, but they only work for so long. Once the side effects start popping up, the user will have difficulty exercising or may not even be able to exercise. That's why everything they've worked for will go down the drain. Since steroids are addictive, once the user stops taking them, their body will crave and need steroids to function. It will take time for the body to function as it once did. It is healthier and cheaper to train naturally. Producing similar results is possible with a good diet and a regular exercise routine. Many people have become successful bodybuilders and athletes while remaining natural. Hard work and the extra time and effort in achieving your goals so is much more rewarding than relying on illegal drugs for a quick fix. Disclaimer: Bodybuilding.com do not condone the use of steroids. Possessing or selling anabolic steroids without a valid prescription is illegal. Dietary supplements sold by are not prescription drugs. Rather, they are offered as safe alternatives for people who are looking to support exercise performance and overall health. Consult a doctor if you experience side effects of steroids. References Cochran, Lee. Broken promises, broken lives. Lives. Leader. 1 Sept. 1991 pp. 1B+ Collins, Rick. Anabolic steroids, bodybuilding, and the law. 1999-2000 www.steroidlaw.com Flax, Elian. Steroids: Little Demanding That High-School Athletes 'Just Say No. Education Weekly.12 Oct. pp 1+ Iole, Kevin. Steroid Use continues despite damning truth. Las Vegas Review-Journal/Sun. April 28, 1991. pp. 1E+ James, Michael. Bulk Up, Up, and Away Go All Your Dreams. Even the most muscular athlete can't win a hospital bed. Top sport. February 1989. 18-22 Lukas, Scott E. The Drug Library: Steroids. Springfield: Enson Publishers, Inc., 1994 Nuwer, Hank. Steroids. New York: Franklin Watts, 1990 Ribadeneira, Diego. 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