

Steroids and Teens

What Steroids Can Do To You; An Article for Teens...



Over the past decade, anabolic steroid abuse became a national concern. These drugs are used illicitly by weight lifters, body builders, long distance runners, cyclists, and others who claim that these drugs give them a competitive advantage and/or improve their physical appearance.

Overall, youth steroid use remains alarmingly high. According to the 1999 Monitoring the Future Study, the percentage of eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders who reported using steroids at least once in their lives has increased steadily over the past four years (an average of 1.8 percent in 1996, 2.1 percent in 1997, 2.3 percent in 1998, and 2.8 percent in 1999).

The truth is... the use of steroids is a growing problem among today's teenagers, who among other things, get a large portion of their misunderstood information from the fitness industry and "muscle magazines." While it is evident that there exists a growing use of steroids, there most definitely is no indication that the issue is going to fade away without some kind of intervention. It should be noted, that there are many obvious risks and side effects from teen steroid abuse.

Several of these **SIDE EFFECTS** include:

- Sterility
- Premature ossification (closing over) of growth plates in long bones (stunted growth)
- Aggressiveness
- Acne
- Connective tissue injury - irreversible
- Masculinization (among women)

Even scarier, there is evidence that teens today are **NOT** afraid of experimenting with and using steroids. It is crucial to understand the reasons for this thinking if we are to attempt to find a solution.

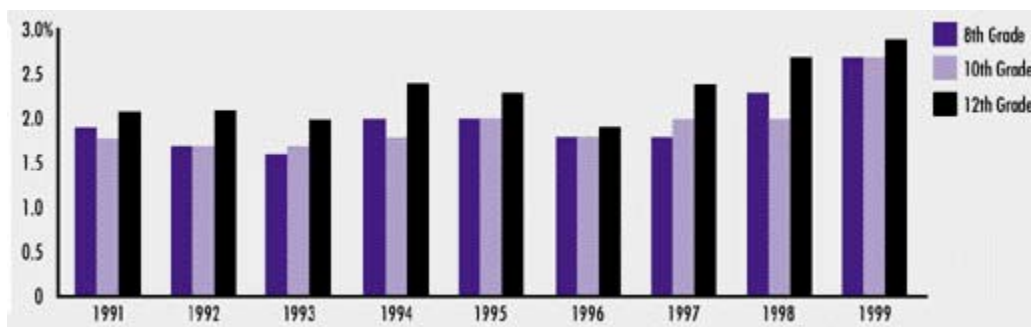


Some of the reasons teens gave for experimenting with steroids were:

- Not making the sports team
- Not meeting peer pressure demands
- Not getting “the girls”
- Not being able to compete with others who are using steroids
- Not looking as good as they want



Lifetime Use of Steroids: 8th Graders, 10th Graders, and 12th Graders 1991-1999



Today's teens have seen many of their athletic role models admit to some form of steroid use at some time in their lives. This may be giving them mixed messages. It may suggest that steroid use is the necessary ingredient to develop a career in sports.

Many of these same teens also feel they are invincible -- able to withstand any fear or reservations that may exist about the use of these drugs. In addition, they are reluctant to believe any warnings offered by the medical community and the media, who so often have delivered alarmist attitudes towards steroid use.

Parents and coaches can also be found guilty of placing emphasis on young athletes:

- They often push young athletes into sports development programs.
- Glorify youngsters who are willing to risk their bodies and morals in order to win.
- Demand that young athletes aspire to greatness at any cost.

Adults have a great impact (positive or negative) on the actions of teenagers, so it is crucial that parents and educators be aware of the impact of steroids on teenagers. Teenagers also have a great impact on the actions of other teens!

If you have a friend who is using steroids, talk to them, they just might listen to you.

There are also socio-cultural factors that play a role in steroid use:

- 🔍 Locker room talk becomes the place to pass along twisted information from one teen to another, in order to justify drug use.
- 🔍 Taking risks is essential to the success of great athletes. In order to be drafted and make millions of dollars, you must risk taking steroids. These are common perceptions, whether they are right or wrong, they exist.
- 🔍 Group dynamics – This is when a group of guys will collectively agree to the positive effects of steroids. This dynamic occurs more easily than with one's independent judgment. They are conforming to peer pressure and pressure from older siblings, older teammates, and media heroes.

Ultimately, how will we control and compact the rampant use of these drugs?

The only viable option is to educate adults and teens and to find alternatives to steroids so teens can opt for less risky supplements. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has set up an Internet site at www.steroidabuse.org. The NIDA is at www.nida.nih.gov. Also recommended is www.drugabuse.gov.



Photo of common steroids, not actual size.

