



## Performance-Enhancing Drugs

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With the urge to get an edge, even young athletes today are tempted by the “promise” of performance-enhancing drugs. In fact, kids in middle school are trying them. Are they following in the footsteps of their professional sports role models?

Performance-enhancing drugs carry big risks for both men and women. Many are illegal and all can cause side effects. Some are serious or permanent.

You’ve probably heard the most about anabolic steroids. Maybe that’s because about 3 million people use them. Ten percent are teens. Athletes are attracted to them because they can increase muscle mass, improving strength, allowing tougher training, and shortening recovery time. But most professional and amateur athletic organizations ban them.

Anabolic steroids are a synthetic version of testosterone. You can take them as tablets, patches, gels, or injections. These are common brand names: THG, Turinabol, Dianabol, Android, Durabolin, and Oxandrin. Doctors sometimes prescribe them for men who have very low levels of testosterone, or for people with muscle wasting or rare types of anemia. Without a prescription for conditions like these, though, anabolic steroids are illegal.

Worse, they can cause liver problems, increase blood cholesterol, and lead to aggressive behavior or depression. If users share needles, they also increase their risk of getting HIV, hepatitis, or other diseases. Teens are likely to become dependent on anabolic steroids, which may also stunt their growth. Men can develop large breasts, baldness, increased acne, or shrunken testicles. Women can develop male traits, such as deeper voices or increased body hair.

Worried about the steroids your doctor prescribed for you? No need to be. Anabolic steroids—sometimes called ‘roids, hype, pump, or juice—are very different from corticosteroids, the type of steroid used to treat conditions such as asthma or arthritis.

Stimulants (Dexedrine, Ephedra, Sudafed, or cocaine) and diuretics (Diamox, Marazide, or Aldactone) are two other types of drugs that are also commonly used by athletes. Both have too many side effects to list.

Over-the-counter (OTC) supplements are also popular products used to enhance performance. But the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) doesn’t regulate them. Creatine is an example of a supplement used by more than 5 percent of middle school and high school students—but often at dosages four to six times what is recommended. Are they safe? That’s very questionable. Gastrointestinal side effects are common. High doses can cause kidney, liver, or heart problems. The long-term impact on children and teens is unknown.

Be sure to have a heart-to-heart talk with your teen about performance-enhancing drugs. And pay attention to the products he or she buys. Do you have questions or are you having trouble getting through to your child? Feel free to both come to me for a frank discussion.

Call it an old-fashioned idea. But a healthy diet, skill, professional guidance, a lot of grit, and hard work are the best combination for making great strides in sports. Taking short cuts to strength and stamina with performance-enhancing drugs is nothing short of cheating.



If you have any questions please feel free to contact me @ 873-3244 or [mcglynnrx@tds.net](mailto:mcglynnrx@tds.net)

Thanks, Dan McGlynn