CONSUMER ADVISORY

NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE MEDICINE

FDA Warning on Androstenedione (Andro)

The Anabolic Steroid Control Act, signed into law in October 2004, classifies androstenedione and 17 other steroids as controlled substances. As of January 2005, these substances may not be sold without a prescription.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has announced a crackdown on products containing androstenedione, commonly known as "andro." The products are marketed over the counter as dietary supplements that enhance athletic performance. In the body, androstenedione is converted into testosterone and estrogen.

While ads claim that andro-containing supplements promote increased muscle mass, research has not shown this to be the case. In addition, studies have shown side effects and potential long-term risks; androstenedione poses the same kinds of health risks as anabolic steroids. Given the lack of proven benefits and the risks, the FDA is requesting companies to stop distributing dietary supplements containing androstenedione. The FDA is also encouraging Congress to consider legislation to classify these products as a controlled substance.

Potential Long-Term Risks

- For men—shrinkage of testicles, growth of breast tissue, impotence
- For women—male pattern baldness, increased facial hair, increased risk for breast cancer and endometrial cancer, blood clots
- For youth—acne, early start of puberty, stunted growth

Advice to Consumers

Consumers should understand that there are risks for serious side effects. Do not take supplements with andro.

More Information

- FDA Press Release
  www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/news/2004/hhs_031104.html (3/11/2004)

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- FDA Androstenedione Questions and Answers www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/androqa.html (3/11/2004)

- FDA White Paper, "Health Effects of Androstenedione" www.fda.gov/oc/whitepapers/andro.html (3/11/2004)CAM on PubMed www.nlm.nih.gov/nccam/camonpubmed.html Search for published research articles about androstenedione.