



STEROID ABUSE by Law Enforcement Personnel

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A Guide for Understanding the Dangers of Anabolic Steroids

STEROID ABUSE BY LAW ENFORCEMENT PERSONNEL

Anabolic steroid abuse, once viewed as a problem strictly associated with body builders, fitness “buffs,” and professional athletes, has entered into the law enforcement community. Law enforcement personnel have used steroids for both physical and psychological reasons. The idea of enhanced physical strength and endurance provides one with “the invincible mentality” when performing law enforcement duties. The short-term adverse physical effects of anabolic steroid abuse are fairly well known. However, the long-term adverse physical effects of anabolic steroid abuse have not been studied, and as such, are not known. In addition, this type of abuse may result in harmful side-effects as well as serious injury and death. The abuser in most cases is unaware of these hidden dangers.

This guide will help you to understand why anabolic steroids are being abused, and how you can educate law enforcement personnel and others about the dangers of these drugs. This guide will also discuss the dangerous medical effects associated with steroid abuse. By working together we can greatly reduce the abuse of anabolic steroids. It is important to recognize this problem and educate our co-workers in the law enforcement community.

WHAT ARE ANABOLIC STEROIDS?

Anabolic steroids are synthetically produced variants of the naturally occurring male hormone testosterone. Both males and females have testosterone produced in their bodies: males in the testes, and females in the ovaries and other tissues. The full name for this class of drugs is **androgenic** (promoting masculine characteristics) **anabolic** (tissue building) **steroids** (the class of drugs). Some of the most abused steroids include Deca-Durabolin®, Durabolin®, Equipoise®, and Winstrol®. The common street (slang) names for anabolic steroids include arnolds, gym candy, pumpers, roids, stackers, weight trainers, and juice.

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The two major effects of testosterone are an androgenic effect and an anabolic effect. The term androgenic refers to the physical changes experienced by a male during puberty, in the course of development to manhood. Androgenic effects would be similarly experienced in a female. This property is responsible for the majority of the side effects of steroid use. The term anabolic refers to promoting of anabolism, the actual building of tissues, mainly muscle, accomplished by the promotion of protein synthesis.

WHY ARE STEROIDS ABUSED?

Anabolic steroids are primarily used by bodybuilders, athletes, and fitness "buffs" who claim steroids give them a competitive advantage and/or improve their physical performance. Also, individuals in occupations requiring enhanced physical strength (body guards, construction workers, and law enforcement officers) are known to take these drugs. Steroids are purported to increase lean body mass, strength and aggressiveness. Steroids are also believed to reduce recovery time between workouts, which makes it possible to train harder and thereby further improve strength and endurance. As a result of these claims, others, including law enforcement personnel, have used steroids for personal and professional reasons.

The law enforcement profession is both mentally and physically challenging. As a result, law enforcement personnel seek remedies and solutions to perform their daily tasks more effectively. Anabolic steroids are a drug of choice because they are known for increasing the size and strength of muscles more quickly and easily, and increasing one's endurance while performing physical activities. Some law enforcement personnel may believe that steroids provide them a physical and psychological advantage while performing their jobs.

WHERE DO YOU GET STEROIDS?

Doctors may prescribe steroids to patients for legitimate medical purposes such as loss of function of testicles, breast cancer, low red blood cell count, delayed puberty and debilitated states resulting from surgery or sickness. Veterinarians administer steroids to animals (e.g.

cats, cattle, dogs, and horses) for legitimate purposes such as to promote feed efficiency, and to improve weight gain, vigor, and hair coat. They are also used in veterinary practice to treat anemia and counteract tissue breakdown during illness and trauma. For purposes of illegal use there are several sources; the most common illegal source is from smuggling steroids into the United States from other countries such as Mexico and European countries. Smuggling from these areas is easier because a prescription is not required for the purchase of steroids. Less often steroids found in the illicit market are diverted from legitimate sources (e.g. thefts or inappropriate prescribing) or produced in clandestine laboratories.

HOW ARE STEROIDS TAKEN?

Anabolic steroids dispensed for legitimate medical purposes are administered several ways including intramuscular or subcutaneous injection, by mouth, pellet implantation under the skin and by application to the skin (e.g. gels or patches). These same routes are used for purposes of abusing steroids, with injection and oral administration being the most common. People abusing steroids may take anywhere from 1 to upwards of a 100 times normal therapeutic doses of anabolic steroids. This often includes taking two or more steroids concurrently, a practice called "stacking." Abusers will often alternate periods (6 to 16 weeks in length) of high dose use of steroids with periods of low dose use or no drug at all. This practice is called "cycling." The length of time that steroids stay in the body varies from a couple of days to more than 12 months.

PHYSICAL & PSYCHOLOGICAL DANGERS

There is increasing concern regarding possible serious health problems that are associated with the abuse of steroids, including both short-term and long-term side effects. The short-term adverse physical effects of anabolic steroid abuse are fairly well known. Short-term side effects may include sexual and reproductive disorders, fluid retention, and severe acne. The short-term side effects in men are reversible with discontinuation of steroid use. Masculinizing effects seen in women, such as deepening of the voice, body and facial hair

growth, enlarged clitoris, and baldness are not reversible. The long-term adverse physical effects of anabolic steroid abuse in men and in women, other than masculinizing effects, have not been studied, and as such, are not known. However, it is speculated that possible long-term effects may include adverse cardiovascular effects such as heart damage and stroke.

POSSIBLE PHYSICAL SIDE EFFECTS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- High blood cholesterol levels – high blood cholesterol levels may lead to cardiovascular problems
- Severe acne
- Thinning of hair and baldness
- Fluid retention
- High blood pressure
- Liver disorders (liver damage and jaundice)
- Steroids can affect fetal development during pregnancy
- Risk of contracting HIV and other blood-borne diseases from sharing infected needles
- Sexual & reproductive disorders:

Males

- Atrophy (wasting away of tissues or organs) of the testicles
- Loss of sexual drive
- Diminished or decreased sperm production
- Breast and prostate enlargement
- Decreased hormone levels
- Sterility

Females

- Menstrual irregularities
- Infertility
- Masculinizing effects such as facial hair, diminished breast size, permanently deepened voice, and enlargement of the clitoris.

POSSIBLE PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTURBANCES INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- Mood swings (including manic-like symptoms leading to violence)
- Impaired judgment (stemming from feelings of invincibility)
- Depression
- Nervousness
- Extreme irritability
- Delusions
- Hostility and aggression

LAWS AND PENALTIES FOR ANABOLIC STEROID ABUSE

The Anabolic Steroids Control Act of 1990 placed anabolic steroids into Schedule III of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA) as of February 27, 1991. Under this legislation, anabolic steroids are defined as any drug or hormonal substance chemically and pharmacologically related to testosterone (other than estrogens, progestins, and corticosteroids) that promotes muscle growth.

The possession or sale of anabolic steroids without a valid prescription is illegal. Simple possession of illicitly obtained anabolic steroids carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison and a minimum \$1,000 fine if this is an individual's first drug offense. The maximum penalty for trafficking is five years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 if this is the individual's first felony drug offense. If this is the second felony drug offense, the maximum period of imprisonment and the maximum fine both double. While the above listed penalties are for federal offenses, individual states have also implemented fines and penalties for illegal use of anabolic steroids.

STERIOD ALTERNATIVES

A variety of non-steroid drugs are commonly found within the illicit anabolic steroid market. These substances are primarily used for one or more of the following reasons: 1) to serve as an alternative to

anabolic steroids; 2) to alleviate short-term adverse effects associated with anabolic steroid use; or 3) to mask anabolic steroid use. Examples of drugs serving as alternatives to anabolic steroids include clenbuterol, human growth hormone, insulin, insulin-like growth factor, and gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB). Examples of drugs used to treat the short-term adverse effects of anabolic steroid abuse are erythropoietin, human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), and tamoxifen. Also, diuretics and uricosuric agents may be used to mask steroid use.

Over the last few years, a number of metabolic precursors to either testosterone or nandrolone have been marketed as dietary supplements in the U.S. These dietary supplements can be purchased in health food stores without a prescription. Some of these substances include androstenedione, androstenediol, norandrostenedione, norandrostenediol, and dehydroepiandrosterone (DHEA), which can be converted into testosterone or a similar compound in the body. Whether they promote muscle growth is not known.

ARE ANABOLIC STEROIDS ADDICTIVE?

An undetermined percentage of steroid abusers may become addicted to the drug, as evidenced by their continuing to take steroids in spite of physical problems, negative effects on social relations, or nervousness and irritability. Steroid users can experience withdrawal symptoms such as mood swings, fatigue, restlessness, and depression. Untreated, some depressive symptoms associated with anabolic steroid withdrawal have been known to persist for a year or more after the abuser stops taking the drugs.

STEROID ABUSE WITHIN THE LAW ENFORCEMENT COMMUNITY

Despite the illegality of taking steroids without a prescription and the known dangers of steroid abuse the problem continues to grow in the law enforcement community. In Minneapolis, a police sergeant was charged for possession of steroids. He admitted to being a user of steroids. In Miami, a police officer was arrested for purchasing

human growth hormone kits (HGH) from a dealer. The dealer had also informed Federal officials that the police officer had purchased anabolic steroids from him on four other occasions. In Tampa, a police officer was sentenced to 70 months in jail for exchanging 1,000 ecstasy tablets from police custody for steroids.

HOW CAN WE CURTAIL THEIR ABUSE?

The most important aspect to curtailing abuse is education concerning dangerous and harmful side effects, and symptoms of abuse. Law enforcement officers must understand they can perform their jobs and have a great body without steroids. They should focus on getting proper diet, rest, and good overall mental and physical health. These things are all factors in how the body is shaped and conditioned. For additional information on steroids please see our website at www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov