

Anabolic Steroids

Let us first differentiate anabolic steroids used for enhanced athletic performance from other corticosteroids used for very legitimate medical purposes. Steroids such as cortisone, when injected into an inflamed joint, can be an extremely useful form of pain relief. Steroids packaged in inhalers have revolutionized the treatment of asthma. Prednisone, given in tablet form, acts as a very powerful systemic anti-inflammatory drug and is used to control many different medical disorders.

Some athletes take a form of steroids — known as anabolic steroids — to increase their muscle mass and strength. The main anabolic steroid hormone produced by your body is testosterone. Testosterone promotes muscle building and is responsible for male traits such as a deeper voice and facial hair. It also has many legitimate medical uses in hormone replacement therapy. The anabolic steroids that athletes use are synthetic modifications of testosterone.

Anabolic steroids enlarge muscles may help speed recovery time from a hard workout. In addition, they produce aggressive feelings (commonly called 'roid rage), which are desirable to some athletes. However, anabolic steroids, which are often taken in doses much higher than those prescribed for medicinal purposes, have many harmful side effects. In essence, men who take anabolic steroids may become more like women, and vice-versa. Both genders are susceptible to severe acne, baldness, tumors, liver abnormalities, psychiatric disorders, and cardiovascular disease. Since many anabolic steroids are injected, there is a risk of infection with HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases transmitted via the blood. Steroids can halt normal growth and development in teenagers, putting them at risk for future health problems.

Androstenedione (andro) has also gained popularity in recent years due to its use by high-profile professional athletes. Andro is a hormone produced by the adrenal glands, ovaries and testes. It's a precursor hormone that's normally converted to testosterone and estradiol in both men and women. Manufacturers suggest that andro increases the body's production of testosterone, allowing athletes to train harder and recover more quickly.

Recent studies have challenged the claims of increased testosterone and muscle growth by taking supplemental androstenedione. Andro has side effects that are very similar to those of anabolic steroids. In March, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) asked companies to stop distributing andro-containing dietary supplements due to a possible increased risk of serious health problems.

Taking anabolic steroids to enhance athletic performance is banned by most sports organizations such as the NCAA, International Olympic Committee (IOC), the NFL, and Major League Baseball. Unless your doctor has prescribed them for medical reasons, taking anabolic steroids is illegal.