

# Anabolic Steroids



## What Are Steroids?

Anabolic steroids are lab-made versions of the hormone testosterone. Health care providers may legally prescribe steroids to treat patients with specific medical conditions.

People, often male athletes in their 20s or 30s, misuse steroids to try to promote muscle growth, burn fat, boost performance, and alter physical appearance.

Testosterone, nandrolone, stanozolol, methandienone, and boldenone are some of the most frequently misused anabolic steroids.

## How Are They Misused?

**Cycling**—taking multiple doses for a period of time, stopping for a time, and then restarting

**Stacking**—combining two or more different steroids and mixing oral and/or injectable types

**Pyramiding**—slowly increasing the dose or frequency of steroid misuse, reaching a peak amount, and then gradually tapering off to zero

**Plateauing**—alternating, overlapping, or substituting with another steroid to avoid developing a tolerance

There is no scientific evidence that these practices mitigate or reduce the harmful medical consequences of these substances.

- Steroids are lab made versions of testosterone.
- They come in tablets or capsules, injectables, patches, gels, creams, implants, and liquid drops.
- The effects of steroids include mood swings, aggression, paranoia, acne, swelling in hands and feet, kidney, liver, and cardiovascular problems, as well as gender-related health effects.

### Steroids are used and misused in various forms:

- The oral route with tablets & capsules, as well as sublingual tablets (taken under the tongue)
- Intramuscular injection with water-based or oil-based solutions
- Applied to the skin with patches, gels, creams, and liquid drops
- Implanted under the skin in pellet form

## What Are Some Common Names?

Some common names for anabolic steroids are *Arnolds*, *Gera*, *Gym Candy*, *Juice*, *Pumpers*, *Roids*, *Stackers*, and *Weight Trainers*.



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A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

## What Is Their Effect on the Mind?

People who misuse anabolic steroids may experience changes in behavior, such as:

- Mood swings
- Increased feelings of hostility & levels of aggression (roid rage)
- Paranoia, mania or delusional behavior

When people stop taking steroids, they may experience withdrawal symptoms which may include fatigue, sleep problems, restlessness, appetite loss, decreased sex drive, depression or even thoughts of suicide.

## What Are Other Health Effects?

Aside from psychological effects, steroid use commonly causes severe acne. Swelling, especially in the hands and feet, may occur. Steroid misuse may lead to serious, permanent health complications such as: kidney problems, liver damage and tumors. Cardiovascular complications may include enlarged heart, high blood pressure, increased risk of blood clots, and changes in cholesterol, all of which increase the risk of stroke and heart attack, even in young people.

Several other effects are gender and age-specific:

In men:

- Shrinking testicles
- Decreased sperm count
- Baldness
- Development of breasts
- Increased risk for prostate cancer

In women:

- Growth of facial/excess body hair
- Decreased breast size
- Male-pattern baldness
- Changes or stop of menstrual cycle

In teens:

- Stunted growth
- Stunted height

## How Can People Get Help?

Some people seeking treatment for anabolic steroid misuse have found a combination of behavioral therapy and medications to be helpful. In certain cases of addiction, patients have taken medicines to help treat symptoms of withdrawal. For example, health care providers have prescribed antidepressants to treat depression and pain medicines for headaches and muscle and joint pain. Other medicines have been used to help restore the patient's hormonal system.

## Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental Health  
and Addiction Services  
[www.ct.gov/dmhas](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas)

## National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)  
1.800.662.HELP (4357)

National Institute on  
Drug Abuse  
[www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)



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