The Steroid-free Choice

Given all of the negative aspects of steroid use, it just doesn't make sense to risk your health and your reputation. You have all sorts of great options when it comes to enhancing your sports performance or your appearance. Consider some of these.

- Talk with your coach, parent, teacher or counselor about any frustrations you might have about how you are performing in your sport.
- Set short-term and long-term goals that will help you excel.
- Be well-hydrated while you compete. That will give you a natural advantage over your competition.
- Focus on getting a proper diet and plenty of rest.
- Don't trust gimmicks or quick-fix approaches.
- Support your friends' decisions to be steroid-free. Talk to a trusted adult if you suspect a friend or teammate is using anabolic steroids.
- Ask your coaches to lead a team discussion about steroid abuse.
- Work with a registered dietician to develop a plan for weight gain or fat loss. Learn when and how much to eat to enhance your athletic performance and how you look.

Additional Help to make the Right Choice

There are many resources available to you to help you achieve your athletic and personal goals – resources geared specifically to athletes like you who want to succeed without using anabolic steroids. A listing of excellent online resources is available at www.nfhs.org.

References

"Hormone Abuse." The Hormone Foundation.

"Steroid Abuse by School-Age Children." U.S. Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration.


Special thanks to the Clell Wade Coaches Directory.

* This brochure, in a pdf format, can be downloaded from the NFHS Web site at www.nfhs.org.
Anabolic Steroids

The hormones used by some athletes to increase muscle mass and strength are **anabolic, androgenic steroids**. Anabolic, androgenic steroids are synthetic forms of the male hormone testosterone. Like testosterone, these steroids have anabolic effects – primarily the increase in muscle tissue – and androgenic effects – the masculinizing effects boys experience during puberty. No anabolic, androgenic steroid is purely anabolic. In other words, the use of the steroids won’t lead to muscle growth without also leading to other undesirable side effects.

Anabolic, androgenic steroids are different from steroids doctors prescribe to treat asthma and inflammation. These steroids are **corticosteroids**. Corticosteroids might be abused by athletes too, but generally not for purposes related to gaining mass and strength.

**Facts about Anabolic Steroids**

These are facts that should be known to anyone who desires to be a better athlete or to change how he or she looks.

- Steroids are powerful drugs. Doctors prescribe them only for specific wasting diseases and for men who don’t produce testosterone.
- The possession or sale of anabolic steroids in the United States without a prescription is illegal.
- The vast majority of high school and college athletes compete steroid free.
- Athletes who use injectable anabolic steroids in high school have tested positive in collegiate drug tests – months after they stop injecting steroids.
- Drug users who inject steroids are at greater risk for infections, including HIV and hepatitis.
- Avoid environments where steroid use might occur.
- Avoid people who you believe are involved with steroid use.
- Androstenedione and other similar hormonal substances are controlled substances and are no longer available in dietary supplements.

**Side Effects from use of Anabolic Steroids**

All professional and amateur sports organizations ban the use of steroids because of their dangerous side effects and because steroids give competitors an unfair advantage.

- The use of steroids by young people whose bones are still growing will result in stunted growth.
- Girls, like boys, use steroids to excel at their sport, recover from injury and modify their appearance.
- Girls who use steroids can grow body and facial hair and experience permanent voice lowering.
- Boys who use steroids can form breast tissue, begin to lose their hair (go bald) and have their testicles shrink.
- Boys and girls who use steroids can have thick, oily skin, which often leads to severe acne on the face and body.
- Steroid users report an initial feeling of well being that is later replaced by mood swings, loss of sleep and paranoia. Reports of depression are common in people who stop using steroids.
- Some athletes have died from steroid use either because of the effects of the steroids on their body or the effects of discontinuing steroid use without a doctor’s help.

**Athletes who are caught using steroids embarrass themselves, their parents, their coaches and their schools.**