

Supplementation

Steroids: Safe Or Savage?



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Today's professional bodybuilders as well as NFL players, wrestlers, etc. use steroids, and are bigger than ever. I know that steroids give you extreme muscular growth, but are there safe ways to take this highly anabolic substance?

I **have always** been amazed at how the body functions, what bones and muscles are which, what they are responsible for, and how to build up these muscles. I myself am into bodybuilding and have enjoyed competing against other teens. What really interests me, though, is the effects of anabolic steroids. Today's professional bodybuilders as well as NFL players, wrestlers, etc. use steroids, and are bigger than ever.

I **know that steroids** give you extreme muscular growth, but are there safe ways to take this highly anabolic substance? Many people believe that steroids are only bad, and many others believe that they can be highly beneficial in bodybuilding and sports athletes, if taken correctly.

Facts

This **encyclopedia excerpt** is a very basic, but factual source of information on what the body does with steroids and what the drug does to the body. It explains that:

- (1) *Steroids are important chemical compounds and they play a key role in bodily processes. They are produced naturally in animals as well as artificially in labs. Each steroid type has a slightly different arrangement of atoms.*
- (2) *Steroids influence bodily metabolism and help form certain vitamins and other important substances. Anabolic steroids are produced in labs from the male hormone testosterone. Some athletes use this drug as well as others to increase strength and bodily weight.*
- (3) *Use of steroids may lead to liver damage, high blood pressure, aggressive behavior and the appearance of male physical characteristics in females and vice versa. (2000 Ed. 894)*



I **did not realize** that steroids are produced in the body naturally. My first thought lead me to believe that steroids would be safe to supplement. Then I read further down the listing and read that the use of steroids may lead to liver damage, high blood pressure, aggressive behavior and the appearance of male physical characteristics in females and vice versa. At this point, I am confused and don't see how these side effects can occur if steroids are produced in the body naturally.

I **found an article** on [Bodybuilding.com](#) that explains some more of the benefits of taking steroids and some of the side effects that can occur. According to the article, "Anabolic steroids increase protein synthesis in muscle tissue and androgens aid the process while increasing training intensity. A greater workload from increased training intensity results in a greater stimulus to the trained muscles that tells it to adapt by getting stronger and bigger" (Rea 2).

This **sounds good but**, there are also problems "The excess estrogen produced shuts down natural testosterone production from 'the boys' in a time progressive manner. When you stop taking steroids, your body isn't producing testosterone and you are not acquiring estrogen from the steroids, which leads to less muscle mass and less 'manly behavior'" (Rea 2).

Scary Thoughts

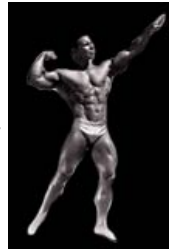
The **author is** very knowledgable and I know that he has written at least one book on chemical muscle enhancement. I didn't know that the normal production of testosterone by the male body may be shut down because of the abundance of steroids in the bloodstream. And if the testosterone production level is shut down, it may not return to normal after the steroids are taken. This scares me greatly and has totally lead me to believe that steroids are highly dangerous and are not to be used by someone who wants to hold on to their health.

I **stumbled across** this magazine article that discusses the use of steroids in the competitive bodybuilding world by comparing "juicing" to building muscle naturally.

According to Hansen, a bodybuilder using steroids will be able to train heavy six days a week and still grow from that routine whereas natural bodybuilders would quickly end up [overtrained](#). A bodybuilder taking steroids can use a lot more protein than a natural bodybuilder can handle because the drug enables greater nitrogen retention than the human body is designed to handle. I've seen bodybuilders use heavy cycles for more than a decade who experience few or no side effects, while others use a minimal cycle and end up extremely ill. The abuse of insulin and diuretics

can be very deadly, especially if the user is unknowledgable of their proper usage. (86)

As you can see, steroids help with the absorption of protein and the side effects seem to vary with different people. "Someone who builds muscle naturally is also developing their health. Look at some of the older champions like Reg Park, Bill Pearl, Jack LaLanne and George Turner. All those gentlemen are still in fantastic condition decades after hanging up their posing trunks. They are shining examples of the positive effects that sensible bodybuilding can bring " (89).



I agree with most of what the author writes, but I have been following a heavy 6 day per week training schedule and have gained considerable strength and muscle without the use of such drugs. I believe that steroids would help to build muscle and cooperate faster but, I also believe that it is a mind game and much can be accomplished with the simplistic hardcore training and eating like a horse.

I also read that the abuse of insulin and diuretics can be very deadly, especially if the user is unknowledgable of their proper usage. This also scares me because I don't know much about insulin or diuretics and might even die experimenting with them.

Government Spending

For my next source, I decided to pull a report off of a governmental website. I quickly found an article from the National Institute on Drug Abuse entitled "Anabolic Steroid Abuse." The article mentions that "serious side effects can occur including heart attacks, strokes, liver damage, acne, infertility, short stature, tendon rupture, homicidal rage, mania, delusions infections such as HIV/AIDS, and sex hormone changes in both males and females" (1).

These side effects all sound terrible, and they further scare me because I have experienced delusions before in my lifetime and never want to go through that again. According to this article, I learned that there are over 100 kinds of different anabolic steroids. This seemed strange to me, because I am positive that not every type of steroid has the same side effects (how the articles and references discuss.) "One study found that exposing male mice for one-fifth of their lifespan to steroid doses comparable to those taken by human athletes caused a high percentage of premature deaths" (6).

This scared me, but lead me to think that steroids affect mice differently or they miscalculated the proportion of steroids used. Then I read the part where it says the extent to which steroid abuse contributes to violence and behavioral disorders is unknown. As with the health complications of steroid abuse, the prevalence of extreme cases of violence and behavioral disorders seems to be low, but it may be underreported or underrecognized 9).

This confuses me even more and allows my mind to think that the government is just giving us all of this information to scare us, possibly because they don't want to fork out the time and/or money to thoroughly research all of the different types and combinations of steroids.



While I was surfing through Bodybuilding.com again, I found an interesting ongoing column called " [IFBB Pro Undercover](#)." This is a column in which questions are sent in and an anonymous professional bodybuilder responds to their questions.

According to this anonymous professional, no health problems exist in any of the Mr. Olympia (largest annual and most competitive bodybuilding competition in the world) today. Just recently, Mike Matarazzo sustained a serious shoulder injury and Fukes (both well-known professional bodybuilders) blew out both of his knees but neither were from the use of steroids. I know of no ex-pro bodybuilders that are having health problems as a result of using steroids. The media (and government) will tell you all kinds of horror stories, but conveniently leave out the fact that the people having health problems were also mind-altering drug users.

I saw a pro football player on the news some years ago talking about how he had to get a heart transplant because of steroids. Later it was found out that he had a massive cocaine problem. The guys on the Olympia Stage are fine! (2). This article really changed in my mind that steroids are not harmful to the body.

I also personally know people who are currently taking or have taken steroids for the muscularity benefits and none of them say to have any of the described side effects.

Mapping Steroids Out

My last source contains a [chart](#) listing the different kinds of steroids and each including their strength gains, mass & weight gains, fat burning, test stimulation, contest prep., appetite suppression, use as an anti-estrogen, side effects, cost, and ability to keep gains (after quit taking.) This chart really opened my eyes and convinced me that the various types of steroids have recognizably different effects. According to this information, some types of steroids have very little to no side effects, thus making them safe.

So, in conclusion, I have learned that steroids can be dangerous, and some can be safer. Thus, I now know more of the different theories of the safety of steroids than when I started my research, but I still do not know who to trust, and I do not feel that I would take them based upon the information I have studied.

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