

Steroids



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A bloodcurdling high-pitched squeal followed by the sound of flesh tearing disrupts the humid and misty environment. The ground shakes as the smell of blood draws in the masses, a feeding frenzy soon follows. Competitions have been held on planet Earth since the beginning of time. Humans began to compete as soon as we laid foot upon our beautiful planet. At first, our competitions were held to see who would eat, who would drink, or to see who would reproduce. Human competition was about life or death and only the strong were guaranteed survival. Today, things are drastically different when compared to the era of the Cro-Magnon. We no longer face the life or death bouts over a single meal. Competition is still as strong as ever but our "prizes" are now more trivial compared to the rewards for the cavemen.

Nowadays, our most fierce competitions are held in football stadiums, hockey rinks, and weight rooms. The rewards for today's gladiators consist of bragging rights over a rival, worldwide notoriety, and large sums of money. How things have changed in a few million years.

Winning has always been a top priority for our species, the cavemen needed to win or their lives were finished. Today, we need to win because our society tells us so. Vince Lombardi summed up the entire modern era when he said, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." Even though things are drastically different, there are some things that have not been lost over millions of years of evolution.

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Humans have always looked for an extra advantage to get an edge on their

competitors and over time many have crossed the line and stepped into cheating. Cheating has become a problem in our society that is obsessed with winning and looks. People often feel inadequate when they cannot live up to standards set by a mainstream society. People look to things that they believe are quick fixes to their problem. Many people see Steroids as an answer to their problems. Steroids can make you more fit for athletic competition and make the body more muscular which is considered appealing. Many people turn to steroids because they think it will give them solutions to the problems they have with society. Many people also fail to see that there are natural ways to enhance athleticism and muscle size that are legal and do not threaten good health. Steroids may seem practical in the short term but it has been proven that the body will suffer in the long term. I have faith that with hard work and safe supplements people can increase muscle mass without the use of steroids. I do not agree with the use of steroids because they are harmful to the body and they are also harmful to the integrity of sports.

Over the years, everyone has heard rumors about the side effects that steroids have on the human body. Over the years, everyone has heard the stories on how steroid abuse has ruined the lives of many people. Anyone who follows sports has heard the Lyle Alzado story about his abuse and his premature death. Lyle Alzado was an all-pro defensive end for the Los Angeles Raiders during the 1980's. Alzado came from a small college and he felt that it was necessary to take steroids to compete with stronger and faster athletes in the NFL. Alzado acquired many health problems including heart disease and kidney problems. Alzado died young of brain cancer that

was probably caused from steroid abuse. It is time to distinguish between the fact and the fiction and find out what steroids really do to the body.

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It is plain to see that the use of steroids creates many changes within the human body. Some of the effects are useful, for example, steroids given to a child that is of abnormally small stature. On the other hand, many of the effects of steroids are harmful and can cause adverse and irreversible damage to the body. One of the first external changes in the body can be seen in the skin. " The skin is the largest organ on the human body and is the most sensitive area for side effects"(Anabolics. com). Acne is sometimes a problem for those who use steroids, acne that results from steroid use spreads from the face down across the shoulders and all over the back. Those prone to acne before steroid usage will have higher probability of it becoming worse. Another side effect on the skin is the appearance of stretch marks. Stretch marks are formed when muscle size rapidly increases and the skin has to stretch to accommodate the new increase in size. Scars are another side effect that can be found in the skin of someone who abuses steroids. " When you stick yourself a couple of times, these little dots begin to show where you put the needle in"(John Swole). " Most of the people whom I know that use steroids spot inject on their ass cheeks because no one can see the track marks that the needles leave behind"(Big Mike). Another common side effect is a loss of hair. Steroids do not cause baldness but they accelerate the process for those who will lose hair later in their lives. The skin and hair are the only two things we are able to see on the

human body. Therefore, the first signs of steroid use can be detected on the external organs. We cannot see the effects of steroids on the internal organs but they do affect the vital organs of the body.

Steroids affect every part of the body in some form. The mind is something that is really affected by steroid consumption. People who use steroids often have severe mood swings and increase in aggression. This behavior is commonly referred to as "roid rage." "Roid rage isn't

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as bad as everyone makes it out to be. It is something that definitely happens but it isn't as common as everyone makes it out to be"(John Swole).

Effects vary between people and the

amounts of steroids they are using. Those prone to aggressive behavior will be more likely to have incidents of roid rage. "I usually get pissed off easily but when I am on a cycle I can definitely tell I get mad over small stuff"(Big Mike). Steroids have also been linked to depression. Users lose strength and size when they stop taking the steroid. It is common for a user to lose over half the weight gained while on a cycle. When a person has experienced a large increase in muscle size, they have a hard time accepting the fact that the steroids were responsible for the increases. People often forget the fact that steroids can alter the mind as well as make changes on the body.

Masculinization and Feminization are probably the ugliest side effects of steroid abuse. As most people know, the major hormone found in the female body is estrogen. Estrogen keeps females from acquiring male characteristics. In the body of a female steroid abuser, the testosterone overpowers the estrogen which leads to the presence of male traits, or

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Masculinization. Women can expect an increase in facial and body hair, deepening of the voice, acne, and balding. Masculinization has serious side effects on a woman's reproductive system. Masculinization will leave women with an enlarged clitoris, menstrual irregularities, and an increased sexual drive. These side effects vary for women depending on the type of steroid they use. The steroids with higher levels of testosterone will deliver the least attractive of the side effects such as facial hair. Women and steroids just should not mix, I do not know any male who likes his woman with a mustache.

Again, we all know that testosterone is the hormone that gives men different traits from

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women. The male body does produce a small amount of estrogen which keeps the production of testosterone in check. When a man increases the level of testosterone in his body estrogen levels will rise to maintain the natural balance in the body. These increased levels of estrogen begin to give males some feminine characteristics. This is called Feminization. Feminization " usually happens after a steroid cycle had just been discontinued when the males' androgen level is low and is easily overshadowed by estrogen(Anabolics. com)." The most obvious feminine changes are only temporary but can be embarrassing when at the beach. The most common of these changes are an increase in fatty deposits, soft muscles, and gynecomastia. Also known as gyno or " bitch tits" in the steroid community, is the formation of breasts in men. Gyno is the most feared side effect among body builders because it does not look attractive and can force

the person to miss a competition. " The body builders who use heavy duty amounts of steroids are the ones who get gyno. The thing is if they get gyno then they don't make any money for competing because very few builders will show bitch tits"(John Swole). Another side effect found in males is the retraction of testicles. Normal testicles hang down in the scrotum because they require temperatures that are a few degrees cooler than the rest of the body in order to function and produce testosterone(Encyclopedia Britannica). Since testosterone levels are increased during a steroid cycle, the testicles do not need to work hard so they retract closer to the body. " You can definitely see your scrotum shrink up after a couple of weeks cycling"(John Swole). We have all heard the jokes about steroid users and their scrotums. Hopefully those who read this paper won't end up wearing a rubber-band and peanut shell for a jockstrap. The purpose of steroids are to bulk up and become more " manly" but it is a shame for those who come out more feminine.

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The side effects previously discussed are those that affect the outside of the body. They are not desirable effects but they are not a real threat to the well being of an individual. Steroids also have their way with the internal/vital organs of the human body. Steroids do good things for the muscles in the human body, except one, the heart. There are several different side effects on the heart/cardiovascular system due to steroid use. First, the heart is a muscle and as it beats it " works-out." If a steroid user performs too much cardiovascular exercise, the heart will begin to grow. The heart may grow to an abnormal size and the

heart will not function properly. During a steroid cycle, cholesterol levels in the body rise. This is because steroid users tend to increase their food intake and because of the rapid weight gains experienced by the user. This increase in cholesterol leads to the thickening and clogging of arteries in the heart. After the steroid cycle is completed, the user can reverse these effects and work to lower his cholesterol levels. Cancer and the growth of tumors have been linked to steroid use. As I mentioned earlier, Lyle Alzado died of brain cancer and research has linked cancer to steroids. The kidneys are also affected by the use of steroids. The kidney's main function is to filter pollutants out of the blood. Therefore, kidneys face a greater challenge when a steroid is being put into the body. Steroids also cause water and salt retention, this leads to an imbalance of electrolytes in the body this can also cause the kidneys to function improperly. Another important filter in the body is the liver, which is also affected by steroid intake. Like the kidneys, the liver must work harder when steroids enter the blood stream. Steroid use can cause a case of Peliosis Hepatis which can cause a complete shutdown of the liver. " The biggest factor leading to negative side effects is misuse(Anabolics. com)." Studies have shown that small doses over some short periods of time will not harm the average man but chances are that those who use steroids will abuse them.

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Steroids are drugs and they are dangerous, especially when they fall into the wrong hands. Like all other drugs they are harmful to the body. People take steroids to improve their strength and to

help their body image but they are really doing more harm than good.

Steroids can do so much damage to the body and now that we know some of

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the common side effects it should not be hard to decide if steroids are the answer.

The use of illegal substances to boost athletic performance is not a problem that is just emerging. Athletes began doping, as it is referred to by some experts, in the 3rd century B. C. during the ancient Olympics, athletes would ingest mushrooms or plant extracts to enhance their abilities. Like I said before, people have and are always going to look for that extra edge that gives them an upper hand. Nowadays, special tests and strict punishments are used to intimidate potential olympiads. Athletes are aware of the potential consequences of anabolic steroid use but many world class athletes continue to shoot up. " Canadian track superstar Ben Johnson was denied his gold medal at the 1988 Olympics after tests showed he had taken anabolic steroids"(NIDA). The International Olympic Committee(IOC) has 17 different types of steroids on its list of banned substances. Wrestlers, discus throwers, swimmers, and track athletes are the most likely athletes to use steroids. Olympic and world class athletes are not the only ones that are turning to steroids to improve their skills. Studies have found that an alarming number of high school kids are using steroids because they believe it will improve their game. Some athletes feel that their natural size and speed are inadequate. Today's athletes considerably bigger and faster compared to those athletes of previous time periods. " The average weight of a college football player in 1956 was 227 pounds. Thirty years later in 1986, the average weight of a college football player was 267 pounds"(Peck). With the level of competition rising like it

is, it makes it easier to understand why someone might feel the need to cheat with steroids. Many are feeling the need to cheat. In a study conducted in 1990, " 74% of the athletes from the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I institutions reported use"(Peck). Athletes at all levels feel the pressure to succeed and excel from all sides of society, including parents. Assistant U. S. Attorney General Phillip Halpein of San Diego stated that " he's uncovered numerous examples of fathers getting steroids for their kids because they wanted them to be better athletes"(NIDA). Bottom line is that people want to be superhuman athletes because they feel the need to win. Everyone, including myself, wants to be a winner. Some are willing to sacrifice their health and their futures to reach a goal of being that " winner."

Some athletes, especially younger competitors, may see steroids as a miracle drug that delivers results without repercussions. In actuality, steroids may do more harm than good for some athletes. Players may suffer from injuries resulting in weakened or torn ligaments and tendons. For those who do not know, ligament/tendon damage is the worst and most difficult injury to recover from as a football player. When a steroid user blows up with all of their new body weight, the tendons/ligaments are still accustomed to the previous weight load. This makes the joints much more susceptible to injuries. This could cause a college athlete to hurt himself and consequently lose his scholarship. Athletes should think about researching steroids before they begin injecting themselves with something that may do them more harm than good.

Steroids are heading for the American mainstream and they are almost there. Even though steroids have been available for decades more people

are turning to them now than ever before. In a society that holds winning and physical beauty in such high regard, the people of our society are looking for some quick answers to their inadequacies. The steroid boom is most

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prevalent in places where there is a high concentration of young people, the minds of these young people are focused on image and sex(trust me I know). Places like Tallahassee, where there are three different colleges, are the areas where the problem is the worst. I myself have been tempted to try steroids and several of my close friends have fallen to this temptation. Two of my closest friends, which helped me out with this paper, use steroids and they do not see anything wrong with using them. That is the scary part. People are willing to overlook long term consequences in order to satisfy their short term wants. I know my chances of using steroids have dropped considerably after researching for this paper. Bottom line is that steroids are drugs and drugs are poisons. Steroids are poisoning our young adults and they are poisoning the competitive spirit of athletics. Society will not change its views or ideals but maybe knowledge about the dangers of steroids will keep the needle away from at least one person's rear end.