Anabolic Steroids

Steroids are natural or synthetic hormones that stimulate growth and accelerate weight gain. Anabolic steroids are laboratory made versions of the male sex hormone, testosterone. When naturally secreted from the pituitary gland, testosterone provides secondary sex characteristics such as a lowered voice and increased body and facial hair.

Anabolic agents were developed in the early 1950's in a search for a testosterone-like drug that would trigger general body growth without the strong masculinizing effects of the male hormone. They are prescribed medically to treat:
- anemia
- breast cancer
- osteoporosis
- some cases of dwarfism
- delayed puberty

Use of steroids should be medically supervised.

Most studies indicate that steroids have little positive effect on aerobic work capacity.

With regard to dose-response: **most studies have not demonstrated greater positive effects with higher doses of steroids.**

Recent investigations also point to a powerful psychological action of steroids. Users report surges in:
- self-esteem
- energy
- sex drive
- increased appetite
- increases aggression
- a lowered tolerance to pain

In addition, users may feel less able to control their emotions, particularly anger, and generally have a lowered tolerance of frustration and poor performance.

**Steroids pose serious risks to both physical and psychological health.** Immediate risks revolve around the steroids' effects as synthetic versions of testosterone. In women, this involves "masculinizing" reactions including:
- facial and body hair
- deepening of the voice
- shrinking breasts
- menstrual irregularities
- enlargement of the clitoris

In men, some of the testosterone is converted to estradiol, a female hormone, often leading to:
- enlargement of the breasts
- decrease sperm production
- shrinking testicles
- baldness
- acne

Possible long term effects of steroids can include:
- impotence and sterility
- atrophy of the testes

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- violent acne
- early baldness
- high blood pressure and increased risk of cardiovascular disease
- possible liver tumors and failure of liver function
- stunted growth and permanent short stature in children and teenagers
- mood changes (agitation and aggressiveness)

Since steroids depress natural body production of testosterone, ex-users may feel depressed and listless, and may experience decrease sex drive and energy. Steroids may produce psychological dependence in users, since the psychological boost and feelings of power are pleasurable and rewarding.

**Treatment options**
Please contact the student counseling service or the student health service to make an appointment, or to obtain confidential information about treatment options -- help is available.