



Steroids

Answers to Your Health Questions by **David B. Gealt, DO**

Q. What are steroids and who uses them?

A. Anabolic steroids (steroids) are substances related to male sex hormones. They are controlled substances used to treat wasting diseases such as HIV and conditions such as delayed puberty. Today, athletes, including student athletes, are illegally using steroids to enhance their performance. The use of steroids among adolescents is growing. Abusing steroids is dangerous. They can cause many health hazards such as liver problems (including cancer), high blood pressure, and stroke. They also cause gender-specific side effects such as baldness and shrinking of the testicles in men and growth of facial hair or a deepened voice in women. Adolescents who abuse steroids can also halt their growth permanently. Steroid abuse also causes aggression and psychiatric side effects such as extreme irritability, delusions, and depression.

Q. How many adolescents use steroids?

A. Steroid use among adolescents is increasing. In 2004, 2.5% of 12th graders, 1.5% of 10th graders, and 1% of 8th graders used steroids during the year according to a study funded by the federal government. Although most steroid users are male, steroid use among female athletes has been increasing.

Q. How do I know if someone is using steroids?

A. Most signs of steroid use are related to the side effects. Signs in males include increased muscle bulk, increased acne, baldness, and skin changes at the site of injection. In females, signs include increased body hair, a deepened voice, and menstrual irregularities. Steroid users may also experience mood changes, headaches, nausea, bloating, and bowel or bladder problems.

Q. How is steroid abuse treated?

A. A sports medicine doctor, a primary care doctor, and a psychiatrist and/or psychologist should work together to help a patient discontinue steroid use. The patient should stop using steroids immediately. He or she may need hormone replacement therapy to manage side effects related to withdrawal. Medications can be used to control headaches and muscle and/or joint pain associated with withdrawal. A prescription medication may be prescribed to control psychological symptoms.

Cooper Bone & Joint Institute

Orthopaedic Physicians

- David H. Clements, MD
- Dino Nicol E. DeJesus, DO
- David A. Fuller, MD
- David B. Gealt, DO
- Paul M. Lafferty, MD
- Lawrence S. Miller, MD
- Robert F. Ostrum, MD
- Mark A. Pollard, MD

NJ Locations

- Voorhees
- Cherry Hill
- Camden
- Willingboro

PA Location

- Newtown Square

World Class Care. Right Here. Right Now.

George E. Norcross, III, Chairman • Joan S. Davis, Vice Chairman • John P. Sheridan, Jr., President and CEO