

# ANABOLIC STEROIDS

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## Street Names

Roids, Durabolin (Nadrolone), Stanozolol, Dianabol.

## Description

Tablets or injectable ampoules.

## Routes of Use

Ingestion or injection.

## History

Anabolic steroids are naturally occurring hormones. They have an anabolic or building up effect on the muscles of the body. The most popularly abused anabolic steroids are derivatives of the male sex hormone Testosterone, which is also responsible for the development of the male reproductive system and secondary male sexual characteristics such as hairiness, deep voice, etc. Anabolic steroids have many medical uses such as to build muscle in bed-ridden and immobile patients, in the treatment of anaemia, and thrombosis. They have been primarily abused by young men to improve their bodies and by athletes, body builders and weight lifters. It is because of this that illegal anabolic steroids are mainly found in the gym or health club scene.

## Effects People Seek

The effect people seek from anabolic steroid use is an increase in muscle mass either for an improvement in appearance or because of better sporting performance and lower training fatigue.

## Other Effects

Regular use by women can lead to the possibly irreversible development of male sexual characteristics such as body hair growth, reduction in breast size, deepening of the voice, increased clitoris size and effects on the menstrual cycle. In males the effects include growth of breasts, decreased testicle size, lowered sperm count and loss of libido. Reports of aggressive behaviour whilst using are common and have led to the controversial term 'roid rage' which is an act of extreme violence by normally placid people due to steroid use. Long term effects include various types of liver damage including cancers and a rare form of hepatitis. Early fusion of the ends of the long bones in young people can lead to stunted growth. Some cases psychiatric problems have also been reported including depression, paranoia and confusion. Injection of steroids can lead to blood borne disorders such as HIV if the needles are shared or other problems if injected incorrectly.

## Dependence & Tolerance

Dependence is psychological with users being convinced of better performance whilst using the drugs. The actual benefit to increased muscle mass or improved sports performance is controversial and may just be a placebo effect.

## The Law

Under the Medicines Act, Anabolic Steroids are prescription only drugs. They also come under class C of the Misuse of drugs Act. This means it is legal to possess them for personal use but it is illegal to supply them. Similarly sportsmen using them can find themselves being banned from their sport and stripped of honours.