

Use of steroids by learners at SA schools

Rape Wise
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ParentTeen foundation/Educator forum

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Dear members,
A warm welcome to all our members.

What's new?

Rape Wise is introducing our latest workshop for schools "Developing protocols and procedures to ensure your schools's legal compliance with new legislation and develop an effective trauma debriefing team at your school" this workshop will be presented throughout the country, please see our website for more details

www.rapewise.co.za.

The use of steroids's by learners at South African schools

Background:

Our lecturers at Rape Wise are often approached by parents and educators about the use of steroids at South African schools.

It was recently reported that tests conducted at 18 of South African top schools revealed that about one in six pupils tested positive for a variety of illegal steroids.

This study was conducted with the **consent** of the **learners parents** and urine samples were sent to a Forensic laboratory in the United States.

According to the South African Institute for drug - free sport, Dr Shuaib Manjra, legal

constraints and the lack of budget are hampering the implementation of routine testing for steroids and other performance enhancing drugs.

Schools may not test for steroids without parental consent unless a child takes part in a national sporting event, such as the Craven week.

One of the other stumbling blocks is that all samples are sent to the United States for testing at R 1500.00 per test and schools can often not afford this.

Parents often support the use of steroids by funding the purchase of schedule five drugs. School boys convince their parents because they perceive the drugs as improving their body image and not to enhance their sporting performance.

What are steroids?

Drugs commonly referred to as "**STERIODS**" are classified as anabolic or anabolic-androgenic and **CORTICOSTEROIDS**.

Corticosteroids - such as cortisone, are drugs that medical doctors typically prescribe to help control inflammation in the body.

Anabolic steroids - are synthetic hormones that can boost the bodies ability to produce muscle and prevent muscle breakdown.

Androstenedione or "Andro" - is a kind of anabolic steroid taken by athletes who want to build muscle. Research suggests that "ANDRO" taken in large doses everyday can significantly increase levels of testosterone, which can lead to a number of health problems.

How do anabolic steroids work?

Anabolic steroids are drugs that resemble the chemical structure of the bodies natural sex hormone **TESTOSTERONE** which directs the body to produce or enhance male characteristics such as increased muscle mass, facial hair growth and deepening of voice.

When anabolic steroids increase the levels of testosterone in the blood, they stimulate muscle tissue in the body to grow larger and stronger. However, the effects of too much

testosterone circulating in the body can be harmful overtime.

Dangers of Anabolic Steroids

Although they might help build muscle, steroids can produce very serious side effects. Using steroids for a long time can negatively affect the reproductive system. In males, steroids can lead to impotence, a reduction in the amount of sperm produced in the testicles and even reduce testicle size.

Females who use steroids may disrupt their menstrual cycles because steroids can disrupt the maturation and release of eggs from the ovaries. This may cause fertility problems.

Steroids taken for an extended period of time can cause:

- Stunted growth of teens
- Liver tumors
- Enlargement of the heart muscles
- Violent, aggressive behaviour and mood swings
- Heart disease
- Acne
- Increased breast growth in males
- Irreversible stretch marks
- Hair loss and male-pattern baldness
- Muscle aches

Teen girls and women risk these additional side effects:

- Male type facial and body hair
- Deepening of the voice
- Enlargement of the clitoris

Talking to your child about steroids

Many pressures may drive young athletes to experiment with steroids. Although most athletes exercise hard, eat properly and take care of their bodies to maintain optimal fitness and performance levels, athletic competition and the desire to look physically toned and fit can be fierce.

You can help your child handle these pressures by:

- Discussing healthy competition with them
- Talking about coaches's and team member's attitudes toward steroids
- Knowing what kind of sporting environment they compete in
- Encouraging them to prepare mentally and physically for competition by eating well and getting enough rest

Watch for the following signs:

- Exaggerated mood swings
- Unusually greasy skin with stretch marks
- A sudden increase in muscle size

If you notice any of these signs, talk to your doctor. Steroids may give teens the sense that they are growing stronger and more athletic, but the consequences are too dangerous to risk.

When there are media reports about athletes using steroids (this years London Olympics), use this as a launching point to discuss the issue making sure that your child understands the health risks, the possibility of legal prosecution and the concept that using steroids is cheating.

Kind Regards

The Rape Wise Team

The Proactive education group

