

What Steroids Can Do to the Body

Anabolic steroids help build bulging muscles by mimicking a hormone in the body called testosterone. They also limit the breakdown of protein in muscle cells, which means that after hard exercise steroid users don't feel as sore as nonusers do. This allows steroid users to exercise more frequently.

No one knows for sure what steroids can do to kids over the long term, but we do know some possible harmful side effects of steroid abuse:

EFFECTS ON THE MIND

▶ Severe mood swings, depression and increased aggression

EFFECTS ON THE BODY

▶ Severe acne, yellowed or "jaundiced" skin

▶ Heart attacks, high cholesterol

▶ Liver damage; increased risk of liver tumors and cancer

▶ Stunted growth in arm and leg bones; increased risk of tendon tears

SOURCES: Drug Enforcement Administration, Mitchell Report, National Institute for Drug Abuse

HORMONES

For teens, hormone balance is important. Hormones are involved in the development of a girl's feminine traits and a boy's masculine traits. When someone abuses steroids, gender mix-ups are possible.

▶ **Boys** can experience changes in their reproductive organs. They can suffer premature hair loss. They also can end up with breasts.

▶ **Girls** can experience changes in their reproductive cycles. They can become more masculine. Their voices can deepen. They might grow more body hair.

