Club and Other Drugs Supplement
Ecstasy, Methamphetamine, DXM, LSD, Stimulants, Sedatives, & Steroids

Information and Facts for Educators and Youth
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Ecstasy

What Is Ecstasy?
Ecstasy (or MDMA, 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is an illegally-produced, man-made chemical manufactured in labs. It is a stimulant with mind-altering (psychedelic or “hallucinogenic”) properties. It is also known as “molly,” “E”, “X”, “XTC,” “bean,” and “roll.” Ecstasy elevates energy, heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature, and users report it makes them feel emotionally open and sociable. The experience of using ecstasy is called “rolling,” “tripping,” or “wigging.”

Why Do Teens Use Ecstasy?
Teens use ecstasy because they report it increases sensory enjoyment (such as listening to music or dancing) and physical sensation, provides energy for all night dance or club events, and produces an enjoyable sociable effect.

How Do Teens Use Ecstasy?
Ecstasy is distributed in capsules, powder, and liquid forms, but is used most often in pill form. Users typically take MDMA by “stacking” - taking three or more tablets at once, or by “piggybacking” - taking a series of tablets over a short period of time. It is occasionally smoked. Repeat users, wanting to repeat the initial high, often mix ecstasy with other substances such as alcohol. This is a very dangerous practice sometimes referred to as “tipsy flipping.”

1 “Club Drugs” is a term used for many different substances that are commonly used in clubs, bars, concerts, and parties. However, their use can occur in other situations and locations. See https://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/club-drugs
Where Do Teens Use Ecstasy?
Ecstasy use is closely tied to the all-night dance club scene, which is why it is labeled a “club drug.” However, it is also used in small social settings, at home, and elsewhere.

Where Do Teens Get Ecstasy?
Because ecstasy is illegal in the United States and in most other countries, teenagers typically get it from drug dealers or friends. Most of the ecstasy in the United States is smuggled in from other countries, with the biggest producer being the Netherlands.

Why Is It Dangerous To Use Ecstasy?
Ecstasy can be very dangerous because it both raises body temperature and suppresses thirst, and in doing so, it can cause overheating (known as hyperthermia), which can destroy the body’s temperature sensor. As a result, the body does not recognize that it is overheated and does not activate cooling processes such as sweating. The dance club environment where ecstasy is often used increases the risk of hyperthermia, as people are dancing and sweating close together. A body temperature of greater than 105º can lead quickly to death.

Sometimes ecstasy users, in an attempt to prevent dehydration, drink too much water or other liquids, which can cause over-hydration. Both dehydration and over-hydration can lead to death - but other harmful effects of ecstasy are also present. These include seizures, irregular heartbeat, liver damage, and psychiatric disorders. Major body systems can be affected, which can cause brain failure, paralysis (the inability to act or function physically), and death.

Another major risk is that ecstasy pills have an especially bad reputation of being impure and often contain chemicals other than MDMA, including caffeine, methamphetamine, or dextromethorphan, an ingredient used in cough syrup. Users cannot know exactly what they are taking, even if they get the pills from their “regular” dealer or use the “same” brand. This uncertainty makes mixing ecstasy with alcohol or other drugs especially dangerous.

Does Ecstasy Affect Everyone in the Same Way?
The stimulating, energizing, and psychedelic effects of ecstasy are common among users, but since ecstasy is so often “laced” with other dangerous drugs or substances, the same pill or dose may affect users differently.
Are There Other Effects Besides a “High”?  

Users like the fact that ecstasy makes them feel more sociable and less inhibited. But teens often do not know that ecstasy users may experience a dramatic drop in mood, often called “the crash,” after ecstasy’s main effect wears off. Some teens find the “comedown” so difficult that they re-use, multiple times, to avoid the effects of withdrawal. Many users also report depression starting the second day after they used ecstasy and lasting for one to five days, or sometimes for weeks. Other side effects include nausea, muscle cramping, blurred vision, chills, sweating, difficulty concentrating, short-term memory loss, sleep problems, decreased appetite, and confusion.

Negative effects increase with frequency of use and size of dose.

Are There Long-term Effects of Using Ecstasy?  

Using ecstasy can cause sexual dysfunction and hormonal problems. In addition, since it makes people feel less inhibited, it can make teens vulnerable to unsafe sexual behavior, sexual assault, or other violence from others.

Since ecstasy damages the body’s ability to regulate temperature, using it can sometimes lead to liver, kidney, or heart failure, or even death. There is also not much known about the long terms effects of ecstasy on the brain. Scientists are researching it now, but long-term users of the drug need to be studied to determine how the brain is affected by long-term use.

Is Ecstasy Legal for Teens?  

In all states, it is illegal to purchase or use ecstasy whether you are a teen or an adult.

In the United States, the federal government classifies ecstasy as an illegal “Schedule I” drug, which means it currently has no recognized and agreed-upon medical benefit, and it has a high risk for abuse with possibly severe psychological or physical dependence.
Methamphetamine (Meth)

What Is Methamphetamine?
Methamphetamine is a strong physical and mental stimulant. It is also known as “meth,” “crystal meth,” “crank,” “ice,” “tweak,” “glass,” “tina,” and “speed.” Slang terms for using methamphetamine include “tweaking,” “hot rolling,” and “party and play.” Methamphetamine raises blood pressure and heart rate and makes the heart beat with greater force. It can permanently damage nerve cells that produce important chemicals in the brain.

Why Do Teens Use Methamphetamine?
Teens typically use methamphetamine to increase productivity and because they like the feeling of power it gives them. Girls may also use it to lose weight. The effects of methamphetamine usually last 6-12 hours, depending on the size of the dose and the purity of the drug.

How Do Teens Use Methamphetamine?
Methamphetamine can be snorted, smoked, injected, drunk, or taken as pills or powder. Smoking is most likely the way that adolescents use methamphetamine.

Where Do Teens Use Methamphetamine?
Methamphetamine is used in many different settings and by many different groups. Teens that are using it to enhance mental or physical performance or lose weight are likely to use it by themselves. Methamphetamine is less of a party drug compared to other “club drugs,” although teens may take it unknowingly when it has been added to ecstasy.

Where Do Teens Get Methamphetamine?
Because methamphetamine is illegal for teens to purchase, they have to get it from a drug dealer or a friend.

Methamphetamine is often imported illegally from Mexico, but sometimes it is manufactured or “cooked” in a home or even in space as small as a trailer; these places are called “meth labs.”
Why Is It Dangerous To Use Methamphetamine?

Using this drug is truly playing with fire. It can cause permanent psychological damage, such as psychotic episodes where one can become totally disconnected from reality even with first use. Methamphetamine can also cause numerous heart conditions, including heart rhythm disturbances, heart attack, and heart failure. Users may also show symptoms of psychosis, such as paranoia, hallucinations, and delusions (for example, the sensation of insects crawling under the skin).

Initially, methamphetamine may enhance performance and concentration, but this effect fades quickly. Users may feel that they are being very productive when, in fact, they are engaging in pointless, repetitive activities.

Methamphetamine is highly addictive, and the line between just “trying it” and getting hooked is very thin. Many adolescents say they started craving methamphetamine after trying it just once. As with heroin and other drugs, using it a second or third time doesn’t produce the same powerful effect as the first time (a condition called “tolerance”). As this tolerance continues to build, teens may take more and more of the drug, hoping to somehow experience that first high.

Does Methamphetamine Affect Everyone in the Same Way?

The energizing, stimulating effects of methamphetamine can be common among users. But, like with so many other illegal drugs, it may be “laced” with other dangerous drugs or substances, and the same dose may affect users differently.

Are There Long-term Effects of Using Methamphetamine?

Ultimately, chronic methamphetamine users become “tweakers” - skeleton-like people who often neglect basic hygiene, have rotten teeth, and pick at their skin, creating sores that often become infected. Many adolescents and adults often view tweakers as people who have hit rock-bottom.

Long-term use of methamphetamine brings with it a wide range of serious mental and physical consequences, including brain damage, paranoia, a weakened immune system, extreme weight loss, permanent central nervous system damage, and engaging in addictive or risky sexual behavior even when the behavior results in negative consequences, like loss of finances, decreased mental functioning, decreased pleasure, or contracting a virus or disease like HIV or hepatitis.
Chemical and other changes in the brain can occur with long-term use, affecting motor skills, learning ability, and emotions. Some of these brain changes persist long after methamphetamine use is stopped, although some of the effects may be reversed after being off the drug for an uninterrupted period (more than 1 year).

Is Methamphetamine Legal for Teens?

Teens and adults are not allowed to simply buy methamphetamine. It is classified as a “Schedule II” drug by the federal government, which means it has high potential for abuse and may lead to physical or psychological dependence. Certain rare medical conditions can be treated with a prescription for a specific form of the drug, which contains a trace amount of methamphetamine. If it is prescribed, it should be taken only under a doctor’s care and supervision.
Over-the-Counter Cough and Cold Medicines with DXM

What Is DXM?
Dextromethorphan, or DXM, is a cough suppressant found in some over-the-counter cough and cold medications.

DXM is generally safe when used at recommended doses, but high doses of DXM can produce hallucinations and the sensation of having out-of-body experiences. When abused, users ingest up to 30 times the recommended dose.

Street terms for DXM include “dex,” “tussin,” “DM,” “drex,” “robo,” “rojo,” “skittles,” “triple C,” and “velvet.” The experience of using DXM is known as “robo-dosing” or “robo-tripping” (named for Robitussin).

Why Do Teens Use DXM?
DXM produces a range of mind-altering effects called “plateaus,” depending on the dose. At lower doses, users feel “stoned,” as on marijuana. At higher doses, DXM causes teens to have delusions (seeing and hearing things that are not there). This “tripping” begins within about 30 minutes of taking DXM; trips can last up to 6 hours.

How Do Teens Use DXM?
DXM is available in liquid, powder, throat lozenge (cough drop), tablet, capsule, and gel cap form. Most abusers take capsules or tablets to avoid the nausea associated with drinking large amounts of cough syrup.

Where Do Teens Use DXM?
At lower doses, teenagers often use it in a social setting (after school at someone’s house, or even during school). DXM is also used at music festivals and concerts, dance clubs, and all-night dance parties. Teens also “trip” by themselves, pursuing DXM’s hallucinogenic effects. This means that even though they may have taken the drug with others, soon users appear to be in their own world as the social benefits of the drug go away and teens report “getting lost in their own minds” – a very unpleasant experience for many.
Where Do Teens Get DXM?

DXM is readily available over the counter in cough and cold medicines and is inexpensive. Some teens shoplift the drug, which places them at risk for legal consequences. Some may take it from medicine cabinets of family members and friends. DXM can also be purchased on the Internet as a powder.

Why Is It Dangerous To Use DXM?

Most tablets containing DXM are 20-30 mg. But to get mind-altering effects, DXM abusers usually take doses of more than 100 mg. Long-term abusers, having developed a tolerance to DXM, may increase doses to 1,000 mg or more. Almost all cough and cold remedies contain multiple ingredients that relieve cold and flu symptoms, including acetaminophen, antihistamines, and pseudoephedrine. Thus, taking many times the recommended dose greatly increases the risk of organ damage from these other ingredients. DXM can also alter your thinking, which can cause you to make risky decisions, like choosing to get into a car with a driver that has been drinking or using drugs. Other risks include extreme nausea and uncontrollable throwing up, hallucinations, psychological damage like long-term confusion and paranoia, extreme anxiety, and violent behavior. High doses taken in a dance-club setting can cause heat stroke.

The liver damage caused by very high doses of acetaminophen can be fatal. High doses also increase the likelihood of a bad interaction with other drugs, such as alcohol.

Are There Long-term Effects of Using DXM?

Extended use of DXM over time can cause many negative effects, including agitation/anxiety, delusions (seeing or feeling things that are not really there), mood swings, and attention and memory problems. These effects worsen when DXM is combined with alcohol. Very high doses of acetaminophen can cause permanent liver damage and death.

Is DXM Legal for Teens?

DXM is legal and able to be purchased by teens from stores in some states but not others. California was the first state to prohibit the sale of products containing DXM to minors in 2012. Since then, several states, including Tennessee, New Jersey, New York, Arizona, Louisiana, Virginia, Kentucky, and Washington, have banned sales of over-the-counter cough medicines containing DXM to those under age 18.
LSD

What Is LSD?

LSD, or lysergic acid diethylamide, is a mind-altering “hallucinogen” that affects the user’s perception of reality. It is a synthetic chemical made from a substance found in ergot, a black fungus that infects the rye plant. In its pure form, LSD is a white odorless powder. LSD is also known as “acid,” “blotter,” “yellow sunshine,” or “Lucy.” Taking LSD is often referred to as “tripping.”

Why Do Teens Use LSD?

LSD and other hallucinogens are often taken to create different sensations in the brain and body. Taking LSD leads to an experience called a “trip,” during which the user hallucinates and experiences mood changes. During the trip, the user’s perception of depth and time becomes impaired, and they may experience distorted perceptions of objects, movement, color, touch, sound, and body image. LSD is sometimes used at concerts or music festivals in an attempt to enhance the experience and enjoyment of listening and dancing to music, but it can have dangerous consequences.

How Do Teens Use LSD?

LSD is most frequently swallowed as a tablet, pill, or liquid. It is also soaked in small pieces of paper called “blotters,” placed on the tongue, and slowly absorbed through the lining of the mouth. Blotters are produced in large “sheets,” often printed with colorful images and cartoons. LSD can also be sniffed, injected, or smoked, but this is not as common.

Where Do Teens Use LSD?

LSD is more often used at clubs and music festivals, but some teens use it in small social settings or at home.

Where Do Teens Get LSD?

Because LSD is illegal in the United States, teens usually get it from drug dealers or friends.

Why Is It Dangerous To Use LSD?

LSD impacts individuals differently, and its effects can depend on the user’s surroundings,
personality, temperament, and mood. LSD may have short-term and long-term consequences. An LSD trip can last up to 12 hours. Some physical side effects during a trip include dilated (or enlarged) pupils, lowered body temperature, nausea, excessive sweating, and rapid heart rate.

LSD is dangerous because it can negatively impact the user’s judgment, and the distorted sense of perception that accompanies a trip can lead to increased risk of physical harm. Users can experience a “bad trip,” which includes feelings of acute anxiety, paranoia, fear, and loss of control. Because there’s no way to stop an LSD trip once it’s begun, these feelings can last for hours. Users can also experience flashbacks, in which individuals re-experience parts of an LSD trip during a time well after the drug has supposedly left their system. Flashbacks can occur many months after the last LSD dose is taken.

Are There Long-term Effects of Using LSD?

LSD is sometimes not considered an addictive drug by users because it does not cause uncontrollable drug-seeking behavior like cocaine, methamphetamine, or heroin; even so, it is still dangerous. Like many other substances, the drug produces “tolerance,” meaning that users who take the drug multiple times must take increasingly higher doses to produce the same effect they felt when they first took it. This is particularly dangerous, given how unpredictable LSD is.

Is LSD Legal for Teens?

In all states, it is illegal to purchase, sell, or use LSD whether you are a teen or an adult.

In the United States, the federal government classifies LSD as an illegal “Schedule I” drug, meaning it currently has no recognized and agreed-upon medical benefit, and it has a high risk for abuse with possibly severe psychological or physical dependence.
Prescription Stimulants (Amphetamines)

What Are Prescription Stimulants?
Prescription stimulants, or amphetamines, are a general class of drugs that speed up both brain and physical activity by stimulating the central nervous system. They are used medically to treat depression, obesity, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

The prescription stimulants most commonly abused by teens are Dexedrine, Ritalin, and Adderall. Chemically, they are quite similar to each other. Street names for these drugs include “speed,” “uppers,” “dex,” “dexies,” and “jollies.” The experience of using these drugs is referred to as “speeding,” “tweaking,” and “spinning (or being spun) up.”

Why Do Teens Use Prescription Stimulants?
Teens report that they use amphetamines to stay alert, to provide energy, or just to get high. Some teens report that it helps them stay awake to study or perform other tasks long into the night.

How Do Teens Use Prescription Stimulants?
These drugs can be swallowed, snorted, or injected; but pills are one of the most common ways that teenagers abuse amphetamines. Euphoria, or the “high,” from stimulants is generally produced when pills are crushed and then snorted or mixed with water and injected.

Where Do Teens Use Prescription Stimulants?
Teens who are using these drugs to study or complete tasks will most likely take them when alone. Recreational use occurs at clubs, concerts and festivals, before or during parties, or at school.

Where Do Teens Get Prescription Stimulants?
Like other prescription medications that teenagers abuse, prescription stimulants can be stolen from parents or relatives, obtained (as a favor or for money) from other teens that have a legitimate prescription, or purchased on the Internet.
Why Is It Dangerous To Use Prescription Stimulants That Are Not Prescribed for You?

These powerful central nervous system stimulants have a wide range of risky physical and psychological effects. Common symptoms include loss of appetite, sleeplessness that can last for days at a time, dangerously high body temperature, and nervousness. Hostility and paranoia are also common among users.

Symptoms requiring medical attention include increased blood pressure, fast or irregular heartbeats, chest pain (angina), joint pain, uncontrolled body movement, and fever. The risk of negative effects increases with higher doses.

Are There Long-term Effects of Using Prescription Stimulants?

Long-term abuse can leads to severe weight loss or malnutrition, paranoia, feelings of hostility, mental illness, periods of delirium and panic, heart failure, seizures, stroke, and even death.

Like methamphetamine, to which they are chemically related, prescription stimulants are very addicting, and increasing amounts are required to get the same effect. Users may reach a point where they need to use alcohol or sedatives to come down from their high.

Sudden withdrawal of these drugs produces severe effects, including extreme fatigue, long and disturbed periods of sleep, irritability, psychological problems like recurring paranoia, anxiety, intense hunger, overeating, and moderate to severe depression.

Adolescents tend to think that prescribed drugs are “safe” because they have a legitimate medical use. But prescription stimulants have effects specific to an individual’s genetic makeup, which physicians take into account when prescribing them. Physicians also consider a patient’s height, weight, biological make up (like their male or female birth sex), and other medical conditions. When doctors prescribe these drugs for teens with legitimate medical conditions, they begin with a small dose and increase it if necessary – closely monitoring the teen to see at what level they are benefiting from the drug. When teens use these drugs without being monitored by a doctor, there is no way for them to know how they will react to any given pill, nor do they know how the drug will interact with 1) other drugs they are taking, 2) their own medical conditions, or 3) other biological factors unique to them.

Are Prescription Stimulants Legal for Teens?

Teens and adults are not allowed to simply buy stimulants. Certain medical conditions can be treated with prescription stimulants and only under a doctor’s care and supervision.
Prescription stimulants can be prescribed to adult, teen, and adolescent patients with ADHD. Treatment of ADHD with prescription stimulants, combined with counseling and close monitoring by a doctor, can help to improve ADHD symptoms for those diagnosed with the disorder.
Prescription Sedatives (Benzodiazepines and GHB)

What Are Sedatives and Which Ones Are Teenagers Abusing?

Prescription sedatives are depressants that affect the central nervous system by slowing down normal brain function. Some sedatives that are commonly prescribed but are also abused by teens are Xanax (known as “Zanies” or “Z bars”), Valium, Ativan, and Klonopin. These are drugs within a category of substances known as benzodiazepines. “Candy,” “downers,” “sleeping pills,” and “tranks” are other street names for these drugs.

Teens also use GHB (Gamma-Hydroxybutyric acid), another sedative, which became heavily regulated in 2000. Increasingly, teens are turning to alternative forms of GHB that are easier to get. Some street names for GHB are “G,” “goop,” “soap,” and “liquid X.”

Why Do Teens Use Sedatives?

Teens use sedatives in place of alcohol to get intoxicated without the calories, or to detox from opiate addiction (from drugs such as heroin, Oxycontin, or Vicodin), or to “come down” from stimulants. They are also used as sleeping pills or because it helps them to feel relaxed. Prescription sedatives, usually benzodiazepines, may be prescribed by a physician for someone struggling with anxiety, insomnia, or seizures.

GHB is used by some bodybuilders to increase muscle mass. Sexual predators also use sedatives like GHB to weaken to knock out their victims so they can take advantage of them. Another sedative that is used for this purpose is called Rohypnol, also called “roofies.” Rohypnol is illegal in the United States.

How Do Teens Use Sedatives?

Teens typically take sedatives in pill form. GHB can be produced in white powder, clear liquid, and capsule forms. Like other recreational drugs, sedatives are often taken in combination with other drugs.

Where Do Teens Use Sedatives?

Teens may take sedatives at parties as part of “pharming,” where pills are put into a candy bowl and shared, or at school with friends. Teenagers may also use sedatives at home, where they may take the drugs from their parents’ medicine cabinets.
Where Do Teens Get Sedatives?

Teens get sedatives from friends that have legitimate prescriptions, or obtained from, shared with, or stolen from family or friends. They can also get these drugs from drug dealers.

Why Is It Dangerous To Use Sedatives That Are Not Prescribed for You?

Because sedatives are often used in a combination of drugs, it is easy to overdose. Teens that use these drugs without a prescription from a doctor run the risk of going to sleep and never waking up.

Mixing two different kinds of sedatives can be lethal. Mixing any sedative with alcohol is particularly dangerous. At high dosages, users may lose the normal reflexes that protect their airway, causing them to choke to death on their own vomit.

Sedatives can also be addicting. Taking them daily or even several times a week can build tolerance, so users need larger doses to get the desired effect. Withdrawal symptoms include anxiety, panic attacks, delirium (seeing or hearing things that aren’t there), sleeplessness, extreme sensitivity to light and sound, seizures, psychotic behavior, and even death.

The loss of inhibition that accompanies these drugs may result in sexual activity that happens without your specific permission. This means that someone may do something to do while you are asleep or not able to physically fight back. GHB and Rohypnol in particular are associated with these sexual assaults. When either one of these drugs is added to a victim’s drink, it causes him or her to become unconscious or immobile. It is never okay to give someone a drug in order to take advantage of them.

Sedatives can have a negative effect on judgment and motor skills (like walking or running), and increases the chance of accidents (car crashes, physical injury).

As with other prescription drugs that are abused, sedatives give the illusion of safety because they have a real medical use. However, the different reactions individuals have to sedatives are determined by a person’s genetics and the dose they take, and physicians take this into account when prescribing these drugs. Dosages between different kinds of sedatives can vary significantly and teens abusing them have no idea what a safe dose might be for them. For example, 1 milligram (mg) of Xanax is very different from 1 mg of Valium.
Are There Long-term Effects of Using Sedatives?

Prescription sedatives slow down brain activity. Long-time users can develop problems with chronic sleepiness and loss of coordination. Continued use can lead to physical dependence and addiction. Withdrawal symptoms like nausea, anxiety, and vomiting can occur when a person stops taking the drug.

The sedative effects of GHB occur in about 15 to 30 minutes, and the effects last 3 to 6 hours. Low doses of GHB can produce nausea. At high doses, GHB overdose can result in unconsciousness, seizures, slowed heart rate, greatly slowed breathing, lower body temperature, vomiting, nausea, coma, and death. Regular use of GHB can lead to addiction and withdrawal that includes insomnia, anxiety, shaking, increased heart rate and blood pressure, and occasional psychotic thoughts. Currently, there is no antidote available for GHB overdose.

Are Sedatives Legal for Teens?

Sedatives in the benzodiazepine category like Valium, Xanax, and Klonopin are legal for teens and adults if prescribed by a medical doctor. As they can be addicting, it is important to remain under a doctor’s care when using these substances and to check in regularly with a physician.

GHB is a Schedule I controlled substance, meaning that it has a high potential for abuse, no currently accepted medical use in treatment in the United States, and a lack of accepted safety for use under medical supervision.
Steroids

What Are Anabolic Steroids?

Anabolic-androgenic steroids are man-made substances that are related to testosterone, the main male sex hormone. When legally prescribed, steroids are used to treat conditions such as delayed puberty and sexual problems, or to help rebuild tissues weakened by conditions such as kidney disease.

Commonly prescribed steroids in pill form include Anadrol, danazol, and Winstrol; injectable steroids include boldenone and testosterone. Street names include “Arnolds,” “roids,” “vitamins,” “product,” “gym candy,” “juice,” “pumpers,” and “stackers.” Some of the most commonly abused steroids include Deca Durabolin (injected), Equipoise (injected), and Winstrol (taken in pill form).

Steroids are used illegally to improve physical performance and body image. In females, these drugs can lead to facial hair and shrunked breasts; in males, they can cause breast enlargement and shrunked testicles. They can also stunt the height of growing adolescents. The oral drugs are more like to cause liver damage, but cancers, heart disease, and emotional problems can also occur.

Why Do Teens Use Steroids?

Male and female athletes use steroids to improve their physical performance. Use for this purpose is higher among boys. Both men and women also use steroids to improve their body image and girls in particular may combine steroids with amphetamines, diet pills, or laxatives to decrease body fat. Depending on the dose, steroids remain in the body anywhere from a couple of weeks to several months.

How Do Teens Use Steroids?

Steroids can be taken orally, injected, or blended into gels or creams to rub into the skin. Teens typically start taking steroids through pills. Since oral use causes liver problems, long-term users may inject the drugs, often sharing needles when doing so.

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2 The steroids referred to here are those that are commonly taken to increase muscle tissue and physical performance, not those that are used to treat conditions such as asthma or allergies.
Steroids are typically taken in cycles of weeks or months (called “cycling”). Often doses are increased, then decreased during a cycle (called “pyramiding”). Abusers often combine several types of steroids to maximize their effectiveness (called “stacking”). In the sports culture, the use of steroids is often called “doping.” If users are caught doing this, they are usually disqualified from participating in sporting events.

Where Do Teens Use Steroids?
Athletes, especially team members, are likely to use steroids in a group. Bodybuilders, more often men than women, may use steroids in groups, especially if only one person has access to the drugs and is sharing them. Females are often secretive about using steroids to change their bodies. Both males and females are likely to use steroids the first time with someone else in order to learn how to use them.

Where Do Teens Get Steroids?
Teens get steroids from friends, gyms, sports training centers, and the Internet.

Why Is It Dangerous To Use Steroids That Are Not Prescribed For You?
Steroids can lead to significant physical and emotional problems. Major side effects include liver and kidney tumors, cancer, high blood pressure, blood clots, severe acne, and stunted height.

Steroids also have gender-specific effects. For boys, these can include shrunken testicles, reduced sperm count, infertility, hair loss, baldness, and development of female breasts. Enlarged breasts may require surgery to correct and baldness may be irreversible.

Girls who take steroids may develop more masculine features -- they can get facial hair, their voices get deeper, and their breasts shrink. These effects can be permanent.

Abusers who are injecting steroids often use dirty needles or share needles, putting themselves and others at risk for HIV and hepatitis B and C.

Steroids also have troubling behavioral consequences including aggression, irritability, extreme mood swings, impaired judgment, and delusions (seeing or feeling things that aren’t really there). The depression that accompanies abrupt withdrawal from steroids has been linked to teen suicide, especially for girls.
Professional athletes who use steroids are dangerous role models. Programs that teach boys about sports nutrition and provide alternatives to drug use to improve strength and performance have been successful in discouraging and preventing use.

**Are Steroids Legal for Teens?**

Steroids like Prednisone are sometimes used to treat a wide variety of health conditions, including asthma and allergies. Many inhalers contain steroids, and these are legal to use with a prescription and when you are under a doctor’s care.

The types of steroids used for increasing muscle mass and physical performance and enhancing body image are illegal for adults and teens to use.
What can I tell my friends when they say drugs featured in this supplement are not harmful?

If you’re concerned that a friend is using and you see changes in physical appearance, sleeping or eating patterns, declining grades, or loss of interest in hobbies of favorite activities, or changes in other behavior, tell them. They may need a reminder that using drugs comes with some serious negative consequences. If you can, point them to sources like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). If you feel like sharing what you have been learning about substance use with your friends, do so.

What if people I know use some of the drugs featured in this supplement?

Although most teens and adults do not use drugs, you may know someone who is using. If you are in a position to help, the best you can do is to encourage them to think about treatment, which will help them keep from experiencing the difficult and harmful effects of drugs. There are a number of resources available for people who need help. For information on where to find treatment for addiction, see the resources on the following page.

Remember that it’s not up to you to convince others to stop using; however you are the one in control of the substances you put in your body. Hanging out with people who use drugs increases the chances that you will, too - often because it can be difficult to resist the pressure to fit in with others who use. It’s up to you to decide to stay healthy and drug-free. You may find you prefer to hang out with people who aren’t using and who have a healthy lifestyle.

- **Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator**
  - 1-800-662-HELP
  - or visit www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov
- **Girls and Boys Town National Hotline Counseling** – 1-800-448-3000
- **Covenant House “g-line”** – 1-800-999-9999
Online Resources

Click on the images below to access some helpful online resources.

Sources

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