Steroid Use Can Cause Irreversible Biological Effects

By Jaclyn M. Cheek

Recent data from NIDA's "Monitoring the Future Survey" shows that teenagers’ use and attitudes about anabolic steroids are going in a negative direction. According to NIDA, more than half a million 8th and 10th grade students are currently using anabolic steroids, along with a rising number of high school seniors who do not think the drugs are dangerous.

Anabolic steroids are synthetic compounds that mimic the action of testosterone. Results from research have shown that anabolic steroid use in adolescents can stop bone growth and has been associated with damage to the heart. In males, steroid use has been shown to cause shrunken testicles, impotence, and breast enlargement. In females, anabolic steroids can effect menstruation, cause growth of body hair, loss of scalp hair, a deepened voice and reduction in breast size. In both males and females, many of the biological effects are irreversible. According to NIDA, use of anabolic steroids has also been linked to increased and unpredictable levels of aggression in humans and animals.

NIDA has started an initiative aimed at making people aware of the dangers of anabolic steroid use. This includes a new Web site- www.steroidabuse.org- which provides science-based information to its visitors. NIDA and its partners, which include the National Collegiate Athletic Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Sports Medicine, The National Association of School Nurses, the National Federation of High Schools and International Students in Action will distribute 250,000 copies of a special community drug alert bulletin on anabolic steroid abuse. In addition, they will also place 500,000 colorful postcards with messages about the harmful effects of steroid abuse, called "art cards," in gyms, bookstores, restaurants, and clubs in Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Miami, Baltimore, Seattle, and Indianapolis. They hope that
this effort will reach and educate the public about the dangers associated with anabolic steroid use.

For further information regarding this article please contact the Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Emory West Campus, 1256 Briarcliff Road N.E., Suite 323-West, Atlanta GA, 30306. You can email us at msacd@listserv.cc.emory.edu, visit our website at http://www.emory.edu/MSACD, or phone us at 404-712-9800.

The Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project is funded in part by the Georgia Department of Human Resources Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Addictive Diseases.

References: