

PUTNAM COUNTY COMMUNITIES THAT CARE COALITION

The Dangers of Anabolic Steroids

The **Putnam County Communities That Care (CTC)** Coalition is an anti-drug coalition that works to build a safe and healthy family-oriented community, which includes reducing the use of harmful substances by our adolescents. It is composed of individuals from all sectors of the community who work together to reduce risk factors and strengthen protective factors through education, enforcement and policy initiatives. As part of our mission to educate the community, we are sending this letter as a way to provide you with information that you can share with your coaches, parents and participants.

Anabolic Steroids, commonly referred to as “Gym Candy, Pumpers, Stackers, Weight Trainers or Juice”, are synthetically produced variants of the naturally occurring male sex hormone testosterone. Some people, both athletes and non-athletes, abuse anabolic steroids in an attempt to enhance performance and/or improve physical appearance. Anabolic steroids can be taken orally, injected intramuscularly, or rubbed on the skin when in the form of gels or creams. These drugs are typically administered in cycles rather than continuously. Furthermore, users often combine several different types of steroids in an attempt to maximize their effectiveness, a practice referred to as “stacking”.

Anabolic steroid use has been associated with a wide range of adverse side effects that can lead to serious, even irreversible, health problems. Some of the most dangerous among these include liver damage; jaundice (yellowish pigmentation of skin, tissues, and body fluids); fluid retention; high blood pressure; increase in LDL (“bad” cholesterol); and decreases in HDL (“good” cholesterol). Other reported effects include renal failure, severe acne, and trembling. In adolescents, anabolic steroid abuse can lead to stunted growth due to premature skeletal maturation and accelerated puberty change.

Furthermore, research shows that anabolic steroids may contribute to psychiatric dysfunction. For instance, abuse of anabolic steroids can lead to extreme mood swings, including manic-like symptoms that could lead to violence. Additionally, users may suffer from paranoid jealousy, extreme irritability, delusions, and impaired judgment stemming from feelings of invincibility.

The potential for anabolic steroid users to become addicted is consistent with their continued abuse despite physical problems and negative effects on social relations. Moreover, steroid abusers typically spend large amounts of time and money obtaining the drug, which is another indication of addiction. Furthermore, individuals who abuse steroids can experience withdrawal symptoms when they stop use – these include mood swings, fatigue, restlessness, loss of appetite, insomnia, steroid cravings and depression, which, when persistent can sometimes lead to suicide attempts.

In 1991 Congress made it illegal to possess or sell anabolic steroids without a valid prescription. The International Olympic Committee, National Collegiate Athletic Association and many professional sports leagues have banned the use of steroids by athletes due to their potentially dangerous side effects and because they give the user an unfair advantage.

Members of CTC are available if you have any questions or would like for us to do a presentation to your organization on this or any other substance abuse trends that affect our children. Please call the Putnam County Youth Bureau at 845-225-6316, Ext. 1117 or the National Council on Alcoholism/Putnam at 845-225-4646, Ext. 11 for further information.

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