

# How Do Anabolic Steroids Affect the Body?

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According to a national household survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as many as 1,084,000 Americans, or 0.5% of the population, reported using anabolic steroids. While not a problem, when prescribed by a trained professional, illegal steroid use, can be both incredibly damaging, and addictive across extended periods.

Unfortunately, the true prevalence of illegal steroid usage is incredibly difficult to determine, but experts believe that the prevalence of this problem is particularly high amongst young male populations bowing to peer pressure and incorrectly relying on steroids to bulk their muscles.

Most commonly associated with sudden mood swings and increased aggression, the mental impact of ongoing and unmonitored steroid usage is well documented. What's perhaps less well-known are its physical side effects. As such, it's vital to consider how do anabolic steroids affect the body and the lasting impact it can have if individuals don't seek [treatment](#)?

## What are anabolic steroids?

Far from the popular belief that steroids are a tool through which to build muscle, doctors will only ever prescribe for this reason in cases of extreme muscle loss or hormonal imbalances. More commonly, anabolic steroids are medically used as a form of anti-inflammatory or to clear up skin infections, etc. thanks to their ability to boost testosterone levels in the body. When prescribed in small doses in a medical setting, these increases in testosterone are carefully overseen and generally not in large enough quantities to cause damage. Unregulated anabolic steroids, however, are used in far less monitored situations, typically in doses that no doctor would condone.

## How Do Anabolic Steroids Affect The Body?

The mental impact of anabolic steroids isn't unknown amongst even illicit users, but the sometimes extreme physical impact of this drug is far less considered. This is a significant problem given that both short and ongoing usage can take a significant toll on the body through side-effects including –

### Short-term physical effects

Even after short periods, individuals abusing anabolic steroids will start to notice certain physical effects. Except for infection which can quickly arise when steroids are misused/unhygienically injected, most of these immediate physical changes will relate to appearance, and may include-

- Notably larger muscles
- Sudden oily skin and acne
- Water retention
- Yellowing of the skin
- And more

### Long-term physical effects

These initial warning signs only worsen as usage continues, making way for some longer-lasting and far more concerning physical effects on the body that most commonly include –

- **Hormonal complications:** With adolescent usage, especially, steroid abuse can lead to significant damage as a result of hormonal complications, including stunted growth, male-pattern baldness, and decreased sperm production.
- **Poor heart health:** Studies continually reveal links between steroid abuse and poor heart health, particularly caused by excessive strain and adrenaline that can lead to high blood pressure, poor cholesterol, and eventually heart disease or attack.
- **Increasing the risks of cancer:** Despite being used as a cancer treatment in medical settings, the impact of steroids on bodily cells can increase the risks of certain cancers, including breast, testicle, and prostate.
- **Visible physical effects:** While the visible effects of steroids are most notable early on, they continue to worsen with usage, and at this stage can include severe acne, constantly greasy hair, and baldness in men and women.

## Do steroids impact men and women differently?

While the illicit use of anabolic steroids is most commonly seen among adolescent males, it's not unheard of for women to also abuse this substance with very different results. For obvious reasons, notably increased levels of testosterone in the female body can especially result in the shrinking of breast tissue (as opposed to in males who can develop breasts during usage), as well as increasing the risk of facial hair, interrupting menstrual cycles, and even resulting in a noticeably deeper voice.



## Steroid misuse requires professional treatment

Whether you or a loved one are abusing anabolic steroids, taking proactive steps towards [detoxification](#) and recovery is the best possible way to avoid these lasting and often irreversible health conditions. Unfortunately, the addictive nature of these steroids means that, even when physical effects like these begin to make themselves known, countless users struggle to break this habit. Professional treatment provided through accessible programs like our [intensive outpatient offerings](#) provide a range of therapies and focuses to help you or your loved understand both steroid reliance and its overall impact, all in the form of [outpatient treatment](#) that makes it far easier to access help whenever you/they feel that it's time to do so.

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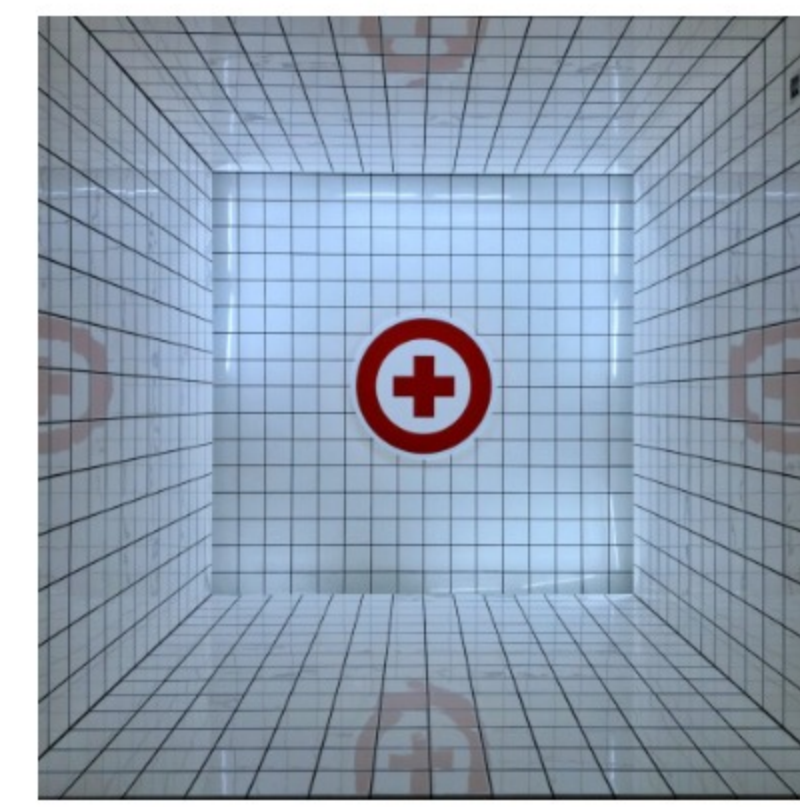
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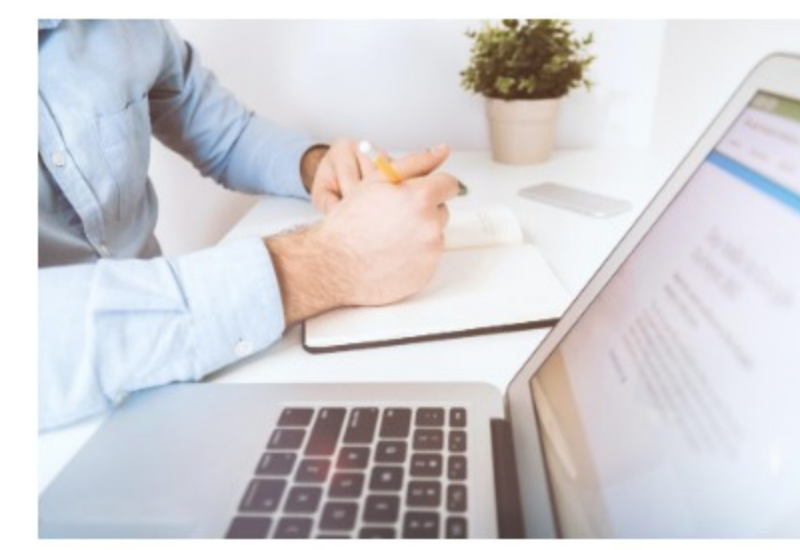
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