

Steroids and Protein

Why are steroids so popular particularly among young men between the ages of 11 and 18? It is likely due to the false promises that steroids offer teenagers. The sound of bigger muscles, increased strength, and improved performance in sports makes it appealing for teenagers to experiment with many types of steroids. However, the other effects of steroids don't sound as glamorous. Acne, baldness, stunted growth, sexual problems, heart and liver disease, depression, anxiety, and paranoia, breast development and shrinking testicles in men, facial hair in women, just to name a few, do not have the same ring to them as having bigger muscles. These side effects can depend on the amount of steroids the athlete uses; the scary fact is that many athletes take doses 5 to 10 times larger than medically prescribed!

Even widely used substances such as protein supplements, which are typically used for improving performance in sports, can be harmful. Some people see these as being a 'natural' substance and therefore think they cannot be bad. There have been studies linking protein supplements to damaging the brain, heart, kidneys, liver, and reproductive organs. There are no studies done on how protein supplements affect teens under the age of 18 so there is no known safe level of use.

It is important for parents and teenagers to address the issue of steroids and their potential harmful side effects. Pushing athletes into sports and demanding greatness from teenagers can have a huge impact on a teenager's use of supplements. Focusing on teenagers talents, abilities, intelligence, and sense of humor, will help the teenager feel good about things other than their physical appearance. Encouraging nutrition,



exercise, and other training techniques will help the teenager feel proud of themselves without using steroids and without the negative side effects. The best anti-steroid is support from parents, peers, and coaches.

For more information, go to www.aadac.com.

This article is one in a series written by the Strathcona County Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy Committee providing information about drug and alcohol issues.

In the next article: **Graduation and Binge Drinking.**

A directory has been developed to help people become more aware of

the services and resources available to deal with drug/alcohol issues. It's a comprehensive list of all services available for prevention, early intervention, and treatment. *The Drug/Alcohol Resource Directory* is available at the Strathcona County Health Centre located at 2 Brower Drive or at Strathcona County Family and Community Services, 21 Festival Way in Sherwood Park. The directory is also available on the internet at www.strathcona.ab.ca



Residents with questions about the strategy can call Strathcona County Family and Community Services at 464-4044.