



# POSITION STATEMENT ON ANABOLIC, ANDROGENIC STEROIDS

National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS)  
Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC)

## EXISTING POLICIES/STANDS

The NFHS strongly opposes the use of anabolic, androgenic steroids (AAS) and other performance-enhancing substances by high school athletes. Such use violates legal, ethical and competitive equity standards, and imposes unacceptable long-term health risks. The NFHS supports prohibitions by educational institutions, amateur and professional organizations and governmental regulators on the use of anabolic steroids and other controlled substances, except as specifically prescribed by physicians for therapeutic purposes. Anabolic, androgenic steroids are prohibited by all sports governing organizations.

## BACKGROUND

Anabolic, androgenic steroids are synthetic derivatives of the male hormone testosterone. Natural testosterone regulates, promotes and maintains physical and sexual development, primarily in boys and men, but with effects in girls and women as well. Like testosterone, AAS have both an anabolic effect (increase in muscle tissue) and an androgenic effect (masculinizing effects that boys experience during puberty). No AAS is purely anabolic. As a result, the use of AAS won't lead to muscle growth without also leading to other unintended, undesirable side effects.

Androstenedione, norandrostenedione and other similar prohormones were available over the counter as dietary supplements just a few years ago. The regulation of these prohormones has changed and they are now defined as controlled anabolic steroids.

According to national surveys, the use of AAS among high school students has been decreasing since about 2001. There are no national studies that measure the extent of AAS use by high school students, although some states publish statewide prevalence data.

Nearly one-third of high-school age AAS users do not participate in organized athletics and are taking AAS primarily to modify their physical appearance. Athletes who use AAS do so for two main reasons: 1) to gain strength and 2) to recover more quickly from injury. AAS are controlled substances and are illegal to use or possess without a prescription from a physician to address a legitimate medical diagnosis. Medical uses of AAS include assisting weight gain in diseases such as HIV-infection and muscular dystrophy, absent gonadal function in men, and metastatic breast cancer in women. AAS should not be confused with corticosteroids which doctors prescribe for medical conditions such as asthma and inflammation.

## POTENTIAL NEGATIVE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE USE OF ANABOLIC, ANDROGENIC STEROIDS

- Decreased potential height, if used before growth plates have fused in pre-pubertal youngsters
- Secondary sex characteristic changes
- Increased acne
- Growth of body/facial hair in girls
- Loss of hair in boys
- Permanent voice-lowering in girls
- Violent, combative behavior

- Sexual dysfunction and impotence
- Mood swings, loss of sleep, paranoia
- Depression upon stopping use
- Organ damage and death from heavy use

### **PREVENTING YOUNG ATHLETES FROM TAKING ANABOLIC, ANDROGENIC STEROIDS**

- School personnel, coaches and parents can reduce AAS abuse by speaking out against such use.
- Talk with your athletes about their concerns and frustrations related to how they look or how they are performing in their sport. Help your athletes establish and reinforce healthy and realistic expectations of their bodies and athletic performance.
- Have your athletes focus on proper nutrition and hydration. If possible, have your athletes work with a registered dietician to develop a plan for appropriate weight gain and/or weight loss.
- Emphasize to your athletes that they should not trust Internet marketing messages about quick fixes and enticing gains in athletic appearance or performance.
- Discourage your athletes' access to environments where AAS use might occur and to people who are involved with AAS.
- Discourage your athletes from subscribing to or reading publications such as muscle magazines that depict unrealistic pictures of men and women.
- Help your athletes understand that using AAS not only is illegal but also is cheating.
- Consider initiating a formal performance-enhancing, drug-education program to educate your athletes and deter AAS use.

### **References/Resources:**

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### **DISCLAIMER – NFHS Position Statements and Guidelines**

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