ANDRO

Since the news hit the press that St. Louis slugger Mark McGwire has been taking androsterone for more than a year, this office has fielded many inquiries about the drug. Unfortunately, only a limited amount of information is currently available about androsterone, and there has not been any good independent research on it. What is known is that it is closely related to testosterone.

Androsterone (pronounced andro-STEEN-die-own) or simply “andro,” is classified as an over-the-counter dietary supplement. It was first developed in the 1970s by East German scientists to try to enhance their athletes’ Olympic performance. The substance was commercially introduced in this country in 1996. Manufacturers assert that a 100mg dose of andro increases testosterone levels by 100 percent and the effect lasts for about three hours. It is banned by the National Football League, the International Olympic Committee, and the NCAA. It was not until the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta that researchers came up with a way to detect andro in the body.

Androsterone is a precursor chemical that is converted into testosterone. Testosterone generally enables one to work-out harder and recover more quickly after exercising. However, one of the more serious side effects, especially for teenagers, is that andro (excessive testosterone/steroids) can stunt growth by tricking the body into thinking it is older and shutting off the growth. There are those who say that since it breaks down into testosterone, it would be foolish for people to believe that andro is an innocuous substance.

Performance-enhancing drugs are as old as sport. As far back as 500 B.C. athletes used opiates before events in the Olympic games for some kind of edge. Fifteen years ago when Dr. Bob Goldman wrote “Death in the Locker Room” and the first tale of steroid use by athletes became public, most thought they already knew the only salient facts they needed to know—that the drugs worked. The drugs make you bigger, stronger, and faster—characteristics that in turn, could make you rich and famous.

Some of the negative side effects of andro may include oily skin, acne, temporary decrease in libido, and hair loss.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Androstenedione is found in most animals (meat) and in some plants (extracts). It is a metabolite of DHEA that serves as a direct precursor (one step removed) in the biosynthesis of testosterone. In mammals, andro is produced in the testes, ovaries, and adrenal glands, and is metabolized in the liver to testosterone. Blood levels of testosterone start rising about 1.5 hours after oral administration of andro and stay elevated for approximately 3 hours.

- Testosterone and androstenedione are anabolic steroids.

- In the medical world, lab testing for androstenedione is generally used in the diagnosis and treatment of females with excessive production levels of androgen (male sex hormone).

- Because andro is a substance produced both in the human body and nature, the FDA classifies it as a dietary supplement. It is sold over the counter at health food stores.

- Recently, General Nutrition Centers, a national chain of nutrition-supplement stores, ordered its 2,700 stores to discontinue selling androstenedione because of safety concerns.

- There is some evidence that in the short term, andro works very much like other anabolic steroids. There is also considerable medical opinion that it also works very much like anabolic steroids over the long term, which is to say it could cause potentially fatal side effects, including heart attacks, cancer, liver dysfunction, and severe mood and mental function disorders.

Editor's note: The sources for this information include a variety of on-line sites, The Manhattan Mercury, and The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics.

CAMPUS RESOURCES
University Counseling Services
Laureate Health Center - 2nd Floor
(532-6927)
Alcohol & Other Drug Education Service
Director: Bill Arm
314 Cafeteria Health Center
Phone: 532-6927
Alcoholics Anonymous
Open Noon Meeting (Mon.-Fri.)
State's Campus Ministry
1811 Donation
Phone: 531-5725
776-1066

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Director: Bill Arm, M.S. Assistant Director: Valeri Cummins, M.S.

Alcohol and Other Drug Education Service
Laureate Health Center - Room 214
Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506-1302
(785)332-4927

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