ANDRO

Since the news hit the press that St. Louis slugger Mark McGwire has been taking androstenedione 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 androstenedione, and there has not been any good independent research on it. What is known is that it is closely related to testosterone.

Androstenedione (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 300 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.

Androstenedione 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 bone 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 eternal human quest for some kind of an edge. Fifteen years ago when Dr. Bob Goldman wrote “Death in the Locker Room” and the first talk 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, meaner, 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 bio-synthesis 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 15 minutes 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 3,700 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.

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

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**CAMPUS RESOURCES**

University Counseling Services  
Lafene Health Center - 2nd Floor  
(Sherry Benton) Phone: 532-6927

Alcohol & Other Drug Education Service  
Director: Bill Arch  
214 Lafene Health Center  
Phone: 532-6927

Alcoholics Anonymous  
Open Noon Meeting (Mon.-Fri.)  
Ecumenical Campus Ministry  
1021 Denison  
Phone: 537-9542  
776-8306

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Alcohol and Other Drug Education Service  
Lafene Health Center - Room 214  
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The intent of Higher Education is to provide accurate, timely information representing the current state of alcohol/drug knowledge. Keep in mind that research on these matters continues daily and is subject to change. It is our intention to keep you informed, not to diagnose or treat illness. For personal alcohol and other drug problems, please consult your physician or counselor.