



Anabolic Steroids

Why in News?

Two of India's track-and-field Tokyo Olympians failed dope tests for using banned anabolic steroids.

What are Anabolic Steroids?

- **About:**
 - Anabolic steroids are **usually used by bodybuilders**.
 - They are **essentially lab-made versions of the male hormone testosterone** and have a **similar effect of increasing muscle mass** as the natural hormone does.
 - It also **increases male characteristics in a person**, such as facial hair and a deeper voice.
- **Different from Corticosteroids:**
 - Anabolic steroids, however, **very different from the steroids that are prescribed by doctors** for inflammations, several autoimmune diseases, or to suppress the body's immune system during a [Covid-19 infection](#).
 - These medicines/steroids are called **corticosteroids and are lab-made molecules that mimic the action of the hormone called cortisol** that controls the body's stress response, metabolism, and inflammation.
 - Unlike corticosteroids, anabolic steroids have limited medical use.

What are they prescribed for?

- The anabolic steroids have a **very limited medical role and are mainly used by doctors to help patients gain weight after a severe illness or injury**.
- It could **also be prescribed in small doses to the elderly** to build muscle mass and in some cases also helps to treat anemia.
- Doctors may also prescribe the medicine to men who have **low levels of natural testosterone**.
- Some doctors use **it for the treatment of osteoarthritis** (a condition where bones wear down over time).

How are anabolic steroids misused?

- The anabolic steroids **are misused mainly by those who want to bulk up as it helps increase one's muscle mass**.
- A 2019 study from Bhubaneswar of anabolic steroid users showed that only one of the 74 participants was a professional bodybuilder, with 18.9 % being students, indicating that **it is used by people other than professional athletes**.
- Although no concrete estimate exists of the number of people using the drug across India, a **2018 study from Jammu and Kashmir found that 7.1 % of athletes used it**.

What are the health impacts?

- Use of anabolic steroids in **the short-term can cause acne and hairfall**.
- Extended misuse of the **substance can also lead to gynaecomastia** (growth of breasts in men)

and **erectile dysfunction**.

- In women, **it can lead to growth of facial hair**. It may also cause extreme anger, paranoia, and impaired judgment.

[Source: IE](#)

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