Anabolic Steroids

Also known as anabolic-androgenic steroids (AASs), anabolic steroids are synthetically produced steroid hormones very similar to testosterone, the primary male sex hormone. The origins of the words *anabolic-androgenic steroids* describe their main physiological property. “Anabolic” comes from the Greek *anabole*, meaning “to build up.” “Androgenic” is from the Greek *andros*, meaning “man,” and *genein*, meaning “to produce”—producing a built-up man.

Initially discovered and artificially reproduced in the 1930s, anabolic steroids were found to promote protein synthesis and storage within cells and to stimulate bone and tissue growth (anabolism), increasing muscle strength and mass. AASs are also appetite stimulants.

Anabolic steroids are commonly used medically to help strengthen patients who are wasting away due to illnesses such as cancer, AIDS, or tuberculosis. AASs may be taken by mouth, injected, or absorbed into the body via a transdermal patch.

Although AASs have very beneficial uses, they are also widely abused—mostly by athletes wanting to increase their performance and improve their physique. The dosages of AASs taken to enhance strength and performance are 10 to 100 times stronger than the dosages used for medical purposes. If you’re thinking that such high doses of AASs cannot be healthy, you’re right.

Long-term abuse of high doses of anabolic steroids is very hazardous. Blood cholesterol levels can be adversely affected by an increase in LDLs (bad cholesterol) and a decrease in HDLs (good cholesterol), which can cause liver and heart damage. Research also reveals that AASs can stunt growth in teenagers due to premature skeletal maturation; increase aggressiveness; cause psychiatric problems and violent mood swings; and lead to acne breakouts, high blood pressure, delusions, and impaired judgment, among other health issues. There is also a chance of getting and passing on HIV and hepatitis if the abuser administers the drug by injection, using dirty needles.

Anabolic steroids are addictive, costly, and dangerous. A 2007 study indicated that approximately 2% of 10th-grade students have used anabolic steroids at least once in their lifetime and that 0.5% were currently using them at the time of the study. The percentage increased with the grade level.

All major sports associations in the United States, as well as associations in other countries, have prohibited the use of AASs due to their harmful side effects and legal and ethical controversies.

In Scripture, the Lord tells Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Cor. 12:9). Hebrews 12:1–2 remind us that “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus . . .”

Since the body is the temple of God’s Spirit, abusing anabolic steroids, or any substance, harms His temple, interferes with a personal relationship with God, and sets a very poor Christian example for others. Christians are to “run with patience”—through steady,
organized practice and exercise, not with drugs that create “artificial” ability. God’s grace is sufficient, whether you are studying for a test or competing in a sport. Let your strength and performance in all areas of life be enhanced by the Lord’s grace and strength so that you may be a good testimony to that great cloud of witnesses and bring glory to God!