

# **Steroids & Performance-enhancing Substances**

## **Talking to Students/Children about Steroids**

You've probably taken the time to talk to a teen about not using illegal drugs like marijuana or cocaine, and it's just as important for you to talk with him or her about not using Steroids and Performance-enhancing Substances (SPES).

Talking about using SPESs and other drugs isn't easy, but it is important. Letting a teen know how you feel about SPES use and the potential, dangerous side effects can help him or her make the smart decision to compete drug-free.

**Educate yourself about Steroids and Performance Enhancing Substances (SPES).** Be prepared to answer hard questions about SPESs and their side effects. Focus on short-term effects, like severe acne and increased body hair, rather than long-term health risks like heart disease or cancer. Teens tend to live in the here-and-now. They're really not concerned with what could happen years from now.

**Speak out against the use of SPESs on a regular basis.** Use recent news coverage of SPESs-related scandals to start a conversation. Discuss ethics of cheating and using SPESs as well as the importance of proper training. If you're a coach, let your athletes know how you feel about using SPESs and cheating.

**Talk about the pressures to use SPESs.** Help teens establish realistic and healthy expectations.

**Stress positive alternatives to SPESs.** Encourage hard work, good nutrition, proper training regimens, hydration, and rest as the right tools to improve athletic performance. Above all, remind teens that sports are supposed to be fun.

**Communicate that shortcuts don't work.** Gimmicks and quick-fix approaches are not the ways to enhance athletic performance or appearance. The human body responds well to nutrition and different types of training to improve strength, muscle tone and ability – safe and healthy options are out there.

**Encourage teens to use coaches, athletic trainers or dieticians as sources of information.** The advice of professionals or other athletes who do not advocate the use of SPESs can be valuable positive influences.

**Be involved.** If you're a parent, talk to your teen's coach or the school's athletic director. Monitor your teen's purchases and make sure they are not purchasing products with questionable ingredients.

**If a teen you know is using SPESs, intervene and help him or her get support from a physician.** The most important part of intervention is reminding the teen that you care and that help is available. It's a good idea to have a medical or mental health

care professional involved with a teen who wants to quit using SPESs. Many teens that stop using steroids experience severe depression and suicidal thoughts. A medical or mental health care professional can help teens work through these feelings safely and win back their sense of well-being.

Need more help in starting a conversation with teens about SPESs? Get advice and more talking points at [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com).

Information obtained from the Healthy Competition/TN – Blue Cross/Blue Shield of TN web site located at [healthycompetitiontn.org/coaches/talking\\_tips.shtm](http://healthycompetitiontn.org/coaches/talking_tips.shtm). This link is no longer available.

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