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Drugs, recreational drug use and attitudes towards doping of high school athletes.

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The purpose of this investigation was to determine the substances used, and the attitudes towards doping of high school athletes. A four-page, self-completed questionnaire was designed to determine the drugs used (licit, illicit and doping substances) along with beliefs about doping and the psychosociological factors associated with their consumption. The questionnaire was distributed to all the high school students enrolled in a school sports association in the Lorraine region in Eastern France. The completed forms were received from 1459 athletes: 4 % stated that they had used doping agents at least once in their life (their main source of supply being peers and health professionals). Thirty-four percent of the sample smoked some tobacco, 66 % used alcohol, 19 % cannabis, 4 % ecstasy, 10 % tranquillizers, 9 % hypnotics, 4 % creatine and 41 % used vitamins against fatigue. Beliefs about doping did not differ among doping agent users and non-users, except for the associated health risks which were minimized by users. Users of doping agents stated that the quality of the relations that they maintain with their parents is sharply degraded, and they reported that they are susceptible to influence and difficult to live with. More often than non-doping agent users, these adolescents are neither happy, nor healthy, while paradoxically, they seem less anxious and they are more self-confident. Our findings suggest that doping prevention among young athletes cannot be limited uniquely to the list of banned drugs.

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