

Drug Alcohol Depend. 2003 Jul 20;71(1):77-86.

Risk factors for anabolic-androgenic steroid use among weightlifters: a case-control study.

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Anabolic-androgenic steroid (AAS) use represents a major public health problem in the United States, but the risk factors for this form of drug use are little studied. We evaluated 48 men who had used AAS for at least 2 months and 45 men who had never used AAS, using a verbal interview and a battery of questionnaires covering hypothesized demographic, familial, and psychosocial risk factors for AAS use. All subjects in both groups were experienced weightlifters; thus, differences between groups were likely to be associated specifically with AAS use, rather than with weightlifting in general. The AAS users and non-users generally described similar childhood and family experiences, but users reported significantly poorer relationships with their fathers and greater childhood conduct disorder than non-users. At the time that they first started lifting weights, AAS users and non-users were similar in their perceived physical, social, and sexual status, but users were significantly less confident about their body appearance. AAS users displayed much higher rates of other illicit substance use, abuse, or dependence than non-users, with use of other illicit substances almost always preceding first use of AAS. These findings suggest that AAS use may be most likely to occur in men with high levels of antisocial traits and low levels of body esteem.

PMID:

12821208

[PubMed - indexed for MEDLINE]