

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

## **NEWS RELEASE**

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

### **Boosting Athletic Performance Comes With Risks – NJ Resident Suffers Near Fatal Consequences from Using Anabolic Steroids –**

Diane P. Calello, MD, Executive and Medical Director  
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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

*Available for Interviews*

**(Newark, NJ) – April 17, 2017** — Bathing suit season is just about here. Have you kept your New Year's Resolution to eat better and exercise more in hopes of losing weight and getting in shape this year?

Since time is of the essence in most everything we do, many people unfortunately look to a “quick fix” for immediate results. The NJ Poison Center urges you to be aware of the possible dangers of using performance-enhancing drugs such as anabolic steroids or over-the-counter (OTC) products claiming to behave like your body's own hormones (anabolic steroids). Users are putting their health at risk each time they take a dose. Such drugs have landed otherwise healthy people in hospitals across the country.

“To those seeking such results, using steroids may seem safe and without risks. Unfortunately, we here at the NJ Poison Center know this firsthand not to be the case,” says Bruce Ruck, PharmD., Managing Director of the NJ Poison Center. “The benefits don't outweigh the risk when you look at the damage steroids cause to the body when used for non-approved or non-medical purposes.”



Photo taken by NJPIES

“We were recently called upon to help in the care of a young adult male who presented to a hospital with severe life-threatening liver disease after using an over-the-counter (OTC) muscle building product,” says Dr. Diane Calello, Medical Director of the NJ Poison Center. “The product contained ingredients not generally considered safe. As symptoms developed, the patient in question was sold additional OTC products to help “protect his liver.” The muscle building products were stopped in time and he was very lucky that his liver function slowly improved.”

Abusing performance-enhancing drugs like steroids pose serious health consequences to those who use them – men, women, teens, young adults, seniors. “Doses taken by abusers can be 10 to 100 times higher than the doses used for medical conditions.”<sup>1</sup> Steroids can be used a few different ways – by mouth, injected into muscles, or absorbed through the skin from gels, creams and patches. No matter how they get into your body, steroids are dangerous and should be avoided. “Remember, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) does not regulate the safety of supplements before they are sold on the market,” says Ruck.

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<sup>1</sup> NIH. Anabolic Steroid Abuse: How are anabolic steroids abused?

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/anabolic-steroid-abuse/how-are-anabolic-steroids-abused>

Some common long-term effects of anabolic steroid use include:<sup>2</sup>

- cardiovascular disease (CD)
- heart attack
- enlarged ventricle of the heart
- stroke
- high cholesterol and blood pressure
- drug dependence
- liver failure/tumors/cancer
- fertility problems
- decreased sexual performance
- blood clots
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)

Some side effects may even be permanent, affecting you for life. Steroid use also causes many unwanted side effects like bigger breasts and impotence in men, deeper voice and more body hair in women, baldness and severe acne in both men and women, etc.

"Some athletes and others who abuse steroids believe that they can avoid unwanted side effects or maximize the drugs' effects by taking them in ways that include:<sup>3</sup>

- cycling—taking doses for a period of time, stopping for a time, and then restarting
- stacking—combining two or more different types of steroids
- pyramiding—slowly increasing the dose or frequency of abuse, reaching a peak amount, and then gradually tapering off"

"There is no scientific evidence that any of [the above] practices reduce the harmful medical consequences of these drugs."<sup>4</sup> Other concerns arise when users inject steroids – these individuals have a greater chance of getting severe skin infections from contaminated needles. They also run the risk of getting and/or spreading HIV and hepatitis.

Do not take chances by waiting until symptoms occur. If an exposure happens, it's good to know help is just a phone call away. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the NJ Poison Experts at (1-800-222-1222).

"Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," says Ruck. "Having a poison expert give you real-time instructions for your specific situation can make all the difference."

### **Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

We are social. Join us on Facebook ([www.facebook.com/njpies](http://www.facebook.com/njpies)) and Twitter (@NJPoisonCenter) for breaking news, safety tips, trivia questions, etc.

**Real People. Real Answers.**

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<sup>2</sup> NIH. Anabolic Steroid Abuse: What are the health consequences of steroid abuse?

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/anabolic-steroid-abuse/what-are-health-consequences-steroid-abuse>

<sup>3</sup> NIH. Drug Facts: Anabolic Steroids. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/anabolic-steroids>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Emergency Medicine of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the Poison Help line, **1-800-222-1222**, any time. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **Poison Help**.

### **About Rutgers**

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.

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