



# Teen Abuse of Human Growth Hormone & Supplements (hGH)

**A** dangerous new substance drug has replaced steroids as the number one performance enhancing substance abused by teens. It's synthetic human growth hormone (hGH).

The purchase of these substances online or offline among teens has more than doubled in a single year according to a report released in July 2014 (conducted in 2013 and 2012) by the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids. It found that 11 percent of high school age teens report using synthetic hGH at least once.

All parents should be concerned about this explosive trend. Abuse of synthetic hGH can carry serious and unknown long term health consequences, and its abusers include a significant number of girls. However, boys are targeted by product sellers, and therefore more vulnerable.

## What is Human Growth Hormone?

Human growth hormone is a naturally occurring hormone produced by the pituitary gland. Its primary functions are to stimulate physical growth in children and teens and to help our bodies repair themselves through cell reproduction.

Growth hormone peaks at puberty, then declines with age. Doctors may prescribe a synthetic form of hGH for children with low growth hormone levels or for particular genetic conditions. Unfortunately, an unscrupulous synthetic pill market is targeting youth, particularly those who want to "bulk up".

## Why Are Teens Abusing hGH?

The ability of hGH to create lean muscle mass and reduce body fat makes it a tempting drug for anyone looking for a shortcut to a more attractive physique. Sometimes referred to as "the Hollywood drug," hGH has recently been touted by several high profile users including Sylvester Stallone and Suzanne Somers. hGH is also used as a performance enhancing drug by athletes to increase metabolism and energy levels and to reduce workout recovery time. Non-prescription use of hGH is banned in all professional sports.

## What Are the Dangers of hGH?

According to the FDA, a medically prescribed and supervised program of hGH therapy carries a 30% increase risk of early death.

Illegal abuse carries an even far greater health risk due to overuse, contamination, and standard production.

Health risks of hGH use include:

- Diabetes
- Cancerous Tumors
- Stroke
- Heart disease
- High cholesterol
- Hormonal imbalances
- Carpal tunnel syndrome
- Nerve, muscle, or joint pain
- Swelling (edema)
- Infertility

Using too much hGH can also cause a condition called acromegaly where a person's facial structure becomes distorted due to out of control bone growth.

## Black Market hGH

When teens see athletes and celebrities using hGH, they assume that they can get a hold of the same substance and see similar results. That is hard to do. However, fake pills abound.

In most cases, what teens are buying isn't the same thing. Here's why: medical grade hGH is costly—roughly \$2,000 a month—and must be injected intravenously and stored in a refrigerated environment. It's also very hard to get.

Any black market substance affordable to teens is likely to be counterfeit, contaminated with foreign substances or, worse, derived from cadavers—an outdated method that can lead to several serious diseases, including neurological disorders.

An attractive, legitimate-looking bottle of pills can easily fool youth into believing the sale of the product is "above board", approved, and proven.

## Keeping Your Kids Away from hGH

Don't assume that your teenager can't or won't get a hold of synthetic hGH. Dangerous products from Mexico and China are pouring into the country and are often just an internet click and credit card away from your teens' hands.

When talking to your teen about hGH, highlight these talking points:

- hGH is not a safe alternative to steroids (also dangerous, of course), nor is it a miracle drug. Only fake hGH comes in a pill.
- Healthy teenagers naturally produce all the growth hormone they need.
- Disrupting your hormonal balance can have serious long term consequences.
- Black market hGH is highly dangerous and often ineffective, impossible to know what's in it.

Don't wait. hGH use is spreading like wildfire. Get ahead of the misinformation and have an open discussion with your teen about the dangers of hGH abuse today.