

One question that I am regularly asked is why do I so strongly deter people from taking steroids. Opinions vary from the sublime - am I a "poacher turned gamekeeper", to the ridiculous "you don't want me to be as big as you" and the amusing, as one young man said to me, "you are just like my Dad, he says do as I say, not as I do!" In truth, that one is probably the most accurate. Look, it's a simple question with a long and complicated answer, so here's my take on the whole thing.

Well firstly let me make the case for when I feel that it *is* acceptable for steroids to be used. As I have said many times publicly on TV and on other media if steroids are only used for a few weeks of the year whilst preparing for competition and are used responsibly alongside a show diet, purely as a dietary supplement, then I really see no problem with that. Yes there are risks but the risks when steroids are used in this way are far less than the risks associated with regular smoking, drinking, eating junk food or using recreational drugs, just ask the NHS!

Also, for some time now, some doctors in America, and these days a few in the UK too, do actually recommend to men over the age of 40 the use of a small amount of steroids to keep testosterone levels steady. Let's be quite clear what that means. It means that twice a week, for most of the year, you would inject yourself with 1ml of testosterone. The preferred site for injections is in the shoulders, most people put them in there, so speaking realistically it means having a jab once a week in each shoulder. Now many people will think that this is outrageous, but I can tell you from the experiences of several friends of mine in their 40's that doing this has changed their lives. Those that work out are born again in the gym and even those that don't speak of feeling younger, stronger and fitter. Also, libido is re-ignited or enhanced and what a difference that can make! Speaking for myself I can't remember the last time that I had a girlfriend who wasn't at least young enough to be my daughter and I'm planning for it to stay that way until the day that I die with a smile on my face!

Ok, so that has cheered up the wrinklies and anyone that competes in non drug tested shows but it's actually the youngsters that ask me the question more than anyone. So let me start off again by making a case for youngsters to take gear even though it's something that I vehemently oppose both publicly and in emails to young wannabes almost every day.

I would say that it *is* possible for someone who is 18 years old to use steroids if it's done in an intelligent, responsible and disciplined manner. This way I would say that there is not really a major chance of any massive or substantial adverse effect. It is well within the realms of reasonable personal risk taking, and you have to look at in perspective when you consider all of the other rubbish that youngsters put into their bodies these days. Perspective is the key word though so let's explore that by doing a "steroids 'v' other crap" comparison using the same dose of steroids that is recommended for older guys. These are just MY OPINIONS and you know what Clint Eastwood said, opinions are like assholes, everybody's got one. So I'm not saying it's fact, like I said at the start, it's just the take on things from someone who has been there and done it.

1. What is worse, 2 ml of gear per week or a massive binge drinking session once a week, resulting in a person being blind drunk? I would say the binge drinking because of the lasting damage to the body and the other dangers that come with

getting into that state on a once a week basis. But if you ask what is worse, 2 ml of gear per week or a glass of wine with dinner once a day? I'd say the gear, a glass of wine a day can actually be beneficial to your health, you see now what I mean about perspective?

2. What is worse, 2 ml of gear per week or a massive junk food meal once a week? The gear again, because a cheat meal once a week when you are on a good diet keeps the fat burners active and increases metabolism. But if you ask what is worse, 2 ml of gear per week or junk food for dinner every night I would say the junk food because your body can't handle that amount of rubbish on a daily basis. Perspective!

3. What is worse, 2 ml of gear per week or smoking? Smoking, every time, no question, I won't train anyone who smokes and I will never date any girl who smokes. Yes I have an incredibly strong opinion on this one but the doctors would back me too I think.

4. What is worse, 2 ml of gear per week or taking recreational drugs? Another no brainer for me, recreational drugs are the curse of the modern day youngster, I have never ever taken recreational drugs, and I will never understand why anyone does. The most I have ever done is smoke a cigar but I doubt if I have smoked more than 10 in my whole life. I get high on life alone and the amazing people and things that I surround myself with in my life; I would recommend that to everyone but never ever condone the use of recreational drugs.

So now I have made a case for the acceptable use of steroids by young people, and before you rush out to buy some gear, let me make you aware of some more facts, these are not opinions, they are FACTS.

Firstly, while we're at it and because I am asked so much can I just destroy a myth that I am regularly questioned about. Taking steroids will not shrink your penis. Excessive use may result in slightly smaller testicles but that is all. That particular point is not opinion it is a medical fact.

Using steroids at a young age will shut down certain bodily functions that are majorly important during the years before the age of 30. I know of one guy who had to come off of the gear for 2 years before he could get his wife pregnant because his body wasn't producing the right stuff. It stands to reason that if you are injecting your body with testosterone it won't bother making so much of the stuff itself and may actually cease production altogether. Impotent in your 20's? Do you really want that? In older guys the production has all but shut down anyway so they have nothing to lose in this regard but youngsters most certainly do.

Another story that I heard was about a guy who had a heart attack at 23, yes really. Obviously this was quite rare and there may have been other factors but 23? Again, do you really want that? Another guy that I know, a good friend actually, had a heart attack at 32 due to years of steroid use, do you want to have that to look forward to when you settle down and raise a family?

Another myth needs to be destroyed now so pay attention. Steroids alone won't make you into a competitive bodybuilder, of all the young men who think that they have

what it takes to be a competitive bodybuilder, for every one who is actually right, there are at least 1000 that are wrong, and the great majority of them are very wrong. Steroids on their own are in fact a very, very small percentage of the whole model that it takes to compete or build an impressive physique. Let me show you this, and I can guarantee that any decent steroid using bodybuilder will agree, the model for success consists of the following.

70% perfect diet and supplementation      29% Hard training      1% Steroids

Now there are those of you that won't believe that but in my experience it is perfectly true. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> documentary that was made featuring me they showed how big I had got drug free, the main reason that I went on and competed from there was because I hired a brilliant coach, Eddie Abbew, who changed my diet and training to take me to the next level. Eddie wanted me to compete drug free, most people agreed that I could have been a British drug free champion but - and this is the get out that many people use - I wanted to compete against the biggest and the best and that meant taking gear when dieting. That argument does stand up when youngsters use it as well, after all, the difference between the drug free British Junior champion and the guys that are not tested is incredible. The size difference is as mind blowing as the size of the crowds that watch the respective finals, non tested shows are far more popular, so I do see the point when youngsters say that they want to take on the big boys. However, you have to ask yourself is it worth taking that amount of risk for the potential rewards? I would say absolutely not. When you consider how many people in this country or indeed the whole world, go to the gym with the intention of lifting weights to get big you would have to say that it's probably only about one in a million bodybuilders who actually go on to make any money or achieve any fame of any sort. So why risk your health, future happiness and life for a literally one in a million chance?

Lets also explore that point for a minute to shall we? Let's look at the way the competition scene has gone over the past few years. It wasn't that long ago that being a British Champion opened all sorts of doors for you because in those days it meant so much. Fast forward to the present day. At the end of 2015 there were more British Champions, World Champions, Mr. & Mrs. Universes etc. with more federations than ever before. A few years ago a pro card was the most prized possession that anyone could aspire to yet at the end of 2015 there were more pro cards, from more federations, won in more classes than ever before in the history of the sport. Next year that figure will rise again as more and more federations, with more and more categories are created. So again look at exactly what real level of "fame" you're going to achieve. If champions and pro cards are ten a penny these days but more people are willing to take unimaginable risks with their health to get one you have to ask yourself just what is more important, your health or a trophy and title that has ever diminishing significance and meaning.

You might say that I'm scaremongering and this won't happen to you but it is a fact that most commonly the first steroid cycles done by teenagers, or for that matter, those in their twenties, are very badly planned in the first place. Also, people easily become reliant on steroids and are less reliant on training and diet. A lot has been made of my 10 year rule, that is, do a minimum 10 years drug free before you even think about taking steroids. The point of doing this is that during that time I would

hope that you would learn enough about training and diet to make sure that these are the corner stones of your project to improve your body. If you have reached a plateau after 10 years or so then maybe steroids are an option, but only maybe, because the gear is a very long way from being “magic” as I have tried to explain to so many people so many times! Personally I didn’t reach a plateau for 22 years, that’s how long I stayed drug free, so there is no definite time on it; you just have to be honest with yourself and not look for shortcuts and cheats.

In conclusion, the difference is, to me at least, very simple. When you are young the risks massively outweigh the benefits. When you are older, the scales tip slightly the other way and if a small amount of steroids is the only dirty part of an otherwise very clean lifestyle then the benefits slightly outweigh the risks. I hope that this helps you make the right decision about steroids and the rest of your life, because they are hard drugs and if you use them that’s exactly what they are going to affect.