

So you've made a commitment to living a healthier lifestyle, shedding the excess weight you're carrying around, approaching nutrition with a newfound appreciation for what it can actually do for your body rather than your emotions, and enlisted the help of a trainer to guide you along the way. You initially feel positive, encouraged, motivated, and you're making progress, slowly but surely. Amidst the new habits you are adopting and the new clothes you are able to buy though, you sometimes find yourself spending too much time in front of the mirror, picking apart those areas that just won't seem to morph into the sexy body parts you have imagined. You touch the fat with disgust. You call yourself ugly, repulsive, and a failure for not being able to make the changes you have so desired. And then you notice your young daughter standing in the doorway of your bedroom, watching in awe as her mother admonishes herself. All she knows is that Mom has been eating cleanly, workout out regularly, and feeling more energized. Now the message she is getting is that all of that effort, those healthy endeavors are for naught. She is a middle school basketball player, always concerned about how her peers are viewing her performance, and she never rests until she has proven that she can make those 10 free throws in a row at practice. You are aware of her desire to make the varsity team when she reaches high school, and you support her passion to excel in the sport. You give her nothing but positive reinforcement and praise. You worry about her, of course, because she puts a tremendous amount of pressure on herself. As a parent you have much power in regards to how your kids view themselves and their abilities. Ever wondered what she might be doing to help herself perform better? You yourself have thought about purchasing those fat burners you've seen advertised. More energy, decreased appetite, work out harder and longer....those claims all sound fantastic. Don't you think that as a teen, your daughter has taken it all in as well, pondered just what some performance enhancing drugs might do to help her succeed and be viewed more positively by her peers, the star of the team? You don't have to be an ergogenic aid expert, but you should know what to watch out for and how to talk to your child to prevent a dangerous situation.

The pressure to perform better...faster...longer...stronger pervades our society. Think of all the current athletes you see on television daily. Your kids see them too. What are they using to aid them in their quest for perfection? Oftentimes they are taking supplements that are not harmful. Sometimes, however, their aids are illegal and toxic. Listed below are common supplements/drugs that your teen might consider using and that you should consider becoming more knowledgeable of :

- **Creatine:** an over-the-counter supplement known for improving performance in sports involving short bursts of high-intensity activity, such as bodybuilding, power lifting, wrestling and sprinting; occurs naturally in the body; side effects include stomach pain, nausea, diarrhea and muscle cramps; effects of creatine on children and teens haven't been well studied; studies involving adults have revealed no significant risks.
- **Anabolic Steroids:** cannot be obtained legally unless a doctor has prescribed for medical reasons; increase muscle mass and strength; are a synthetic modification of testosterone that athletes may use to prevent muscle breakdown from difficult workouts and increase muscle size; have severe physical and psychological side effects including prominent breasts, baldness, shrunken testicles, a higher voice,

and infertility in males and a deeper voice, an enlarged clitoris, increased body hair, baldness, and increased appetite in females. Both males and females may experience severe acne, liver abnormalities and tumors, increased low-density lipoprotein (LDL) cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol), decreased high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol), increased aggression, rage or violence, psychiatric disorders such as depression, and drug dependence.

- **Androstenedione:** is produced by the adrenal glands; a precursor to testosterone; a banned substance; side effects closely mimic those of anabolic steroids, and use can stunt children's growth
- **Stimulants:** most commonly include caffeine and amphetamines; stimulate alertness, sometimes increase aggressiveness, reduce fatigue and appetite; increase heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and metabolism; may increase athletic performance but have side effects which can include nervousness, irritability, and insomnia which can negatively impact concentration and necessary rest.
- **Diuretics:** change the body's fluid balance; can lead to dehydration; commonly used by wrestlers and bodybuilders to allow them to compete at a given weight; can also help athletes pass drug tests by diluting their urine; have few side effects when taken in small doses but can cause severe electrolyte imbalances when used in higher doses and subsequent muscle cramps, exhaustion, decreased ability to regulate body temperature, potassium deficiency, and heart arrhythmias.

Young athletes want to emulate the stars and sports figures who have a competitive edge. And just like adults who oftentimes look for that "magic pill" that will take all their troubles away, they are willing to try things that may cause more harm than good. Talk to your kids about the advice they are getting from coaches or other athletes, and promote the positive aspects of sport and activity aside from winning and being the best. Take your own advice too, and understand that despite those few pounds that may be hanging on, you are a healthier, stronger, more resilient person for making the positive changes in your lifestyle!