

# Illegal use of human growth hormone common among young male weightlifters

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A new study published in *The American Journal on Addictions* reveals that illicit use of HGH (human growth hormone) has become common among young American male weightlifters. Additionally, illicit HGH use in this population is often associated with polysubstance abuse involving both performance-enhancing and classical drugs.

HGH, once an expensive performance-enhancing drug used exclusively by elite athletes, has become cheaply available for illicit users on the street.

Researchers led by Brian P. Brennan, MD, MSc, of McLean Hospital and Harvard Medical School, evaluated 231 male weightlifters in the U.S. aged 18-40 and their reports of [drug use](#).

Results found that 27 (12 percent) reported illicit use of HGH and/or its close relative, insulin-like growth factor-I. All of these 27 men had also used anabolic-androgenic steroids (AAS), and 15 (56 percent) also reported current or past dependence on opioids, [cocaine](#), and/or ecstasy.

These findings suggest that illicit HGH use is common, and is usually associated with abuse of both AAS and ordinary street drugs.

"The long-term risks of high-dose HGH use are little studied, but available evidence suggests that long-term high-dose HGH may have serious medical consequences, including cardiac, [endocrine](#), and respiratory effects, as well as increased risk for certain cancers,"

Brennan notes. "Our findings suggest that mounting illicit HGH abuse may represent a dangerous new form of [drug abuse](#) with potentially severe public health consequences."

Provided by Wiley

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