

Deena Bartel-Wagner
P.O. Box 225
Spencerport, NY 14559
Email editor@verbaloxygen.com

“Gaining an Edge?”

Thump! The ball landed solidly in the outstretched glove. “Nice catch, Morgan,” Dad shouted. Nine-year-old Morgan grinned. He loved baseball and hoped to play on his high school team someday.

“Your practice is paying off,” Dad said. “I noticed that your curve ball is low and just over the corner of the plate.”

“Let’s take a break and drink some of that lemonade Mom made,” said Morgan. As they sat down on the porch, Morgan asked, “Did you hear about the latest Major League player they caught using steroids?”

“I did,” Dad sighed. “It’s too bad he was using them. That’s going to affect his career from now on.”

“Why’s there such a big deal about performance enhancing drugs anyway,” asked Morgan. “Shouldn’t it be okay to get an edge somehow?”

“That’s a big question,” Dad said. “But the more important thing is what anabolic steroids and other drugs can do to your body by using them for a long time.”

Morgan poured some lemonade in both glasses. “What kinds of things can happen?”

“Do you know how steroids work in your body,” Dad asked.

Morgan shook his head. “I know they make your muscles bigger, but that’s about all.”

That's right," Dad agreed. "Steroids are man-made and are similar to testosterone that our bodies produce naturally. Testosterone helps our muscles to develop."

"If it's already in our body, how can it be bad to have more," asked Morgan.

"Your body generally makes just the right amount of testosterone," said Dad. "If you are putting more into your body than what you need this there are going to be problems."

Morgan thought about that for a minute. "I've heard guys at school say that their older brothers are thinking about using steroids because they think it will make them more attractive to the girls."

Dad chuckled. "Well that all depends. When you are using steroids some of the side effects on the outside of your body can be pimples, looking bloated, having greasy hair and your skin turning yellow. Guys can even grow breasts and girls can grow moustaches and beards."

"Gross!" exclaimed Morgan. "You're kidding aren't you?"

"Nope," Dad said. "And that's just for starters. Did you know that your bones have something called growth plates in them?"

"What's that," asked Morgan, looking at his arm and wondering how a plate fit in his arm.

"Growth plates help determine how long your bones will get," said Dad. "When kids take steroids, the growth plates can shut down and your bones quit growing."

"Wow!" said Morgan. "That means you could end up shorter than you should be."

“That’s exactly right,” Dad said. “Of course you won’t notice it right away, but when you do it will be too late.”

“Is there anything else that steroids can do?” asked Morgan.

Dad took a drink of lemonade and nodded. “Your heart and liver don’t react well to steroids. Your liver can grow tumors and you can even have heart attacks or strokes.”

“I’ve heard some of the guys say that their brothers are using stuff called gym candy to help them get stronger,” said Morgan. “What’s that?”

“There are all kinds of names for steroids,” said Dad. “Gym candy is one of them. Some of the other names are roids, juice, Arnolds, pumpers and weight trainers. It doesn’t matter what they are called, they’re all steroids and can cause the same problems.”

“I don’t think I’m interested in building my body that way,” said Morgan. “It doesn’t seem like you’re really gaining an edge after all.”

“I’m glad to hear it,” said Dad. “If you start making those kinds of decisions now, it will be easier to say no when your friends offer you any kind of drug. Now, how about we go work on your fastball. I think I’ve got an idea of how to put a spin on it.”

“Great,” said Morgan. “Let’s go!”

Thought Questions:

1. Why do people take steroids?
2. Dad told Morgan what some of the side effects of steroids can be? List 5 of them.
3. Why do you think Morgan said he didn’t want to build his body by using steroids?

How can you make good choices now of what you will put in your body?

Activity

Design a poster that shows some of the bad things that steroids can do to your body. Use pictures from magazines, or draw and paint the poster. When it's finished, take it to your school and ask if it can be posted where other students can see it.