METHYLPHENIDATE

Description

Methylphenidate is one of the most commonly used drugs in the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, a condition usually diagnosed in children who have persistent inattention, hyperactivity, and restlessness. Many of those affected do not outgrow the condition and require treatment into adulthood. Although it is not clear how methlyphenidate works, it is thought to affect nerve function is certain areas of the brain.

Why Athletes Use It

Athletes occasionally use methylphenidate as a recreational drug. However, athletes who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder use it to improve school performance and reduce the effects of the disease.

Adverse Effects

- Nervousness
- Decreased appetite
- Insomnia
- Abdominal pain
- Tearfulness
- Headaches
- Elevated heart rate (usually only with first few doses)
- Heat illness (rare)
- Abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias)
- Skin rash

Pharmacology

Methlylphenidate does improve coordination and attention span in athletes suffering from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, but it may reduce aggressiveness. It does not improve skills such as hitting a baseball or fielding. Methylphenidate is broken down in the body in a short period, usually about 4 to 6 hours, but its effects may last as long as 24 hours. It cannot be taken with some medications, and interactions with other drugs can be a problem. Short breaks from the medication are often recommended.

Preventive Measures

The International Olympic Committee tests for methylphenidate because it is a stimulant. Acceptable drug levels have not been established for competition, although they have been considered. Athletes should not use methylphenidate as a recreational drug because of its side effects. Athletes with attention deficit disorder should use methylphenidate under a doctor's direction.

Notes: (Up to 4400 characters only)

Notes and suggestions