

The results are in: more people are getting active and hitting the gym than ever before. But if you're one of the [45 million adults](#) in the USA with an active gym membership, you've probably found yourself longing for faster fitness results.

In the pursuit of strength and beauty, muscle supplements constitute a significant market. If you've been in the fitness game for a while, you've heard about common supplements like creatine and [branched-chain amino acids](#) (BCAAs), but what about SARMs? Are SARMs steroids? How do they work?

Sit back, take a rest day, and read on as we explore the enticing world of SARMs.

## What Are SARMs?

Selective Androgen Receptor Moderators (SARMs) encourage the production and growth of muscle in the body by blocking androgen receptors.

Professor James Dalton created SARMs in the 1990s to treat prostate cancer and promote muscle recovery in cancer patients. They have since become a popular topic of conversation for bodybuilders and fitness fanatics.

There are several kinds of chemical compounds which fall under the category of SARMs. These include:

- Ostarine (MK-2866)
- Cardarine (GW501516)
- Ibutamoren (MK-667)

SARMs usually come in the form of a pill capsule or solution, taken orally, but you can also safely take SARMs sublingually or through injection.

## Are SARMs Steroids?

No, SARMs are not steroids. In actuality, many people consider them a healthier alternative to steroids even though they can mimic some of the same results.

Steroids are essentially synthetic hormones. Since their introduction in the 1930s, steroids have had more research performed than SARMs, introduced in the 1990s.

Today, long-term use of steroids is well-known to cause health issues like liver damage, high blood pressure, physical aggression, and even strokes. Even so, for some, the risk of steroids does not outweigh the physical rewards.

Years ago, WADA banned steroids from bodybuilding and other athletic competitions. This mainly resulted from their health consequences, including multiple fatalities, and also in keeping with the sportsmanship of bodybuilding.

When SARMs were introduced as an alternative to steroids, they thrilled bodybuilders with the prospect of quickly building muscle without risking the same side effects of steroids.

Although they work in a similar way to promote muscle growth, people who choose to take SARMs instead of anabolic steroids are choosing a much less dangerous supplement. SARMs lead to slower, more consistent muscle growth and progress.

## How Do You Take SARMs?

You can take SARMs can be orally, sublingually, or through injection. On the other hand, you should only take Anabolic steroids through injection, as consuming them will lead to an increase in liver damage.

In a similar process to steroids, SARMs must be taken in an active and a resting period, known as a cycle. The cycle for SARMs includes about eight weeks on SARMs, followed by at least 8 to 16 weeks off SARMs to rest and recover.

SARMs can suppress testosterone production, making the post-cycle therapy (PCT) process extremely important for restoring your body's natural testosterone levels. Skipping this process in pursuit of fast muscle gains will cost your body's health in the future.

## How Do SARMs Work?

To understand how SARMs work to produce muscle, we must first look into the basic anatomy of muscle growth.

Androgen receptors are located throughout the human body in muscles and other tissues. Androgens, like testosterone and DHT, bind to the androgen receptors, and the resulting reaction leads to protein synthesis and muscle growth. More free-floating available testosterone leads to more reactions.

Selective Androgen Receptor Moderators and Steroids both work like testosterone to react with androgen receptors in the body. However, unlike steroids, SARMs are more selective in the tissues they will affect.

SARMs do not bind with the aromatase and 5a-reductase enzymes, and they only bind with receptors in specific tissues (i.e., muscles). This selectivity prevents the SARMs from affecting other parts of the body and prevents the user from developing severe organ damage.

Because they suppress natural testosterone production, some have even suggested that SARMs may function as a kind of birth control for men. Limited sperm production may be a side effect of SARMs, but at this time, health professionals would not recommend using SARMs for this purpose.

## Are SARMs Legal?

SARMs are currently legal. Although the FDA hasn't approved them for general human use, they have been around for decades in the medical industry, where they are used to promote muscle recovery in patients. While cleared for use in some medical cases, big pharmaceutical companies are reluctant to approve of SARMs for use by the general public.

Access to SARMs is limited because they are not fully FDA approved, but you can still find them in the marketplace. Most available SARMs must be labeled for "research use only," however they are still safe and legal.

Athletes fall under stricter scrutiny than the general public. SARMs are not permitted for use by athletes, and in this regard, officials treat them much the same as steroids.

The World Anti-Doping Agency officially banned SARMs from use in athletes because of their ability to skew natural muscle growth and athletic skills. WADA categorizes SARMs as an "S1 anabolic agent."

Detection of any SARMs compounds within the blood or urine of an athlete will result in disqualification.

## Are SARMs Healthy?

Advocates will often promote SARMs as a safer alternative to steroids. While significantly less harmful than steroids, they still may not be healthy.

Anabolic steroids are undoubtedly much more effective in producing fast results. The side effects of anabolic steroids are generally much broader and more severe, but SARMs are not without their side effects.

## Common Side Effects of SARMs

Although the scientific and medical community have not studied SARMs very broadly, takers of SARMs report some common side effects. These side effects include:

- Headaches
- Nausea
- Irritability
- Acne
- Joint pain
- Testicular pain
- Testosterone suppression

### **Common Side Effects of Anabolic Steroids**

Scientists have conducted more studies on steroids than SARMs, and their side effects are well known. Some bodybuilders continue to take steroids, even when their risks include:

- Liver damage
- Heart attacks
- Acne
- Coarse skin
- High blood pressure
- Stroke
- Insomnia
- Hair loss
- Prostate enlargement
- Prostate cancer
- Gynecomastia
- Testicular shrinkage
- Suicidal thoughts
- Aggression
- Depression

It is essential to note that scientists have primarily studied the health risks mentioned above in adult men and that the side effects of SARMs and steroids may vary for women, children, or adolescents. Women, in particular, may experience undesirable effects from anabolic steroids such as:

- Voice deepening
- Body and facial hair growth
- Hair loss
- Loss of breast tissue

SARMs, on the other hand, are less likely to produce these "masculine" effects in women, as they specifically target muscle and bone development without influencing other parts of the body.

With all of this being said, scientists are still studying SARMs. While steroids have had nearly a century of studies performed, SARMs have only been available for just over thirty years. At the time of this article, there is no conclusive evidence to show that SARMs present a significant danger to one's health.

### **Who Should Take SARMs?**

SARMs are popular among bodybuilders, especially new bodybuilders who have yet to experiment with steroids. Most people consider steroid use to be extreme, but SARMs are relatively socially acceptable. Anyone seeking supplements to enhance their performance and muscle growth can use SARMs.

While they can significantly boost performance, SARMs are not a "miracle drug." You will need to compliment your SARMs with a healthy diet and adequate exercise routine to see real benefits.

You can also take SARMs to aid in weight loss, not just for building bone and muscle. When combined with adequate exercise and a low-carb diet, SARMs will help you trim down or "cut." This is another reason bodybuilders like to use SARMs -- to trim body fat before a competition.

If you are interested in trying SARMs, it is best to try some other options first, as SARMs can have significant side effects. Some other muscle-enhancing supplements include creatine and BCAAs.

Creatine and BCAAs are natural supplements that have also been reported to increase muscle growth. Although these options have been more studied and determined to be safer, SARMs still have the advantage of faster results. Creatine requires a "loading phase" to saturate muscles, and for best results must be taken [within 30 minutes](#) of exercising.

It would be best not to take SARMs in combination with anabolic steroids. You should always consult your doctor before combining any supplement or over-the-counter drug with your prescribed medication. Your doctor can determine if your heart, liver, and kidneys are healthy enough to process SARMs.

Due to limitations imposed by the pharmaceutical industry, SARMs have not been broadly studied, especially in women, pregnant women, or adolescents.

## Types of SARMs

As I mentioned before, selective androgen receptor moderators are a category of compounds known to affect bone and muscle growth. Several compounds fall under this SARMs umbrella, and they all perform similar functions, with some unique differences.

Here I'll explore some of the most common SARMs and their benefits and some common risks.

### Ostarine (MK - 2866)

Ostarine is probably the [most well-researched SARM](#) available. Ostarine supports bone density and muscle growth while also preventing weight loss. This makes it a solid choice for most athletes or bodybuilders and those who want to avoid involuntary weight loss.

### Cardarine (GW 501516)

Cardarine boosts metabolism and encourages your body to turn fat into energy rather than carbohydrates. This supplement is ideal for those looking to lose weight, cut their body fat, or tone their bodies. It is important to note that cardarine can cause significant health problems in high doses.

### Ibutamoren (MK-677)

This supplement supports muscle mass without much fat loss. Ibutamoren is ideal for those looking to "bulk" or gain weight without losing muscle definition. It can also aid in better sleep, muscle recovery, and bone health.

### Testolone (RAD140)

Testolone also encourages muscle and bone development and may also limit prostate overgrowth. Like creatine, Testolone can also boost endurance and performance.

### Andarine (S-4)

Studies have shown Andarine to support bone and muscle growth amazingly well. It is an excellent choice for those looking to gain muscle mass and avoid weight loss. In some cases, however, Andarine is noted to cause vision problems.

### **Accarine (AC-262)**

Accarine aids in increasing muscle mass and bone health and may even support improved sexual functioning. With effects similar to testosterone, Accarine boosts metabolism and fat burning.

## **Where Can I Buy SARMs?**

While their FDA approval is still pending, purchasing SARMs in the United States is legal. Like many vitamins and fitness supplements, the FDA simply hasn't verified the beneficial claims of SARMs compounds.

You may be able to find [SARMs for sale](#) online or at your local fitness and nutritional supply store. As I mentioned previously, these supplements will likely be labeled for "research use," but they are safe and legal for the public to purchase.

Before making your purchase, perform your research to decide which SARM compound is suitable for you. Consider both the benefits and side effects, and consult those you know or online forums to learn more about users' general experiences.

When shopping for the best SARMs, you'll want to look for compounds with a high purity rating. Avoid websites or products that seem suspicious, as the black market demand for SARMs-like compounds remains high even today. Always buy from qualified health and fitness retailers.

## **Conclusion**

Are SARMs steroids? No. Are they better than steroids? Most likely. SARMs are considered a safer, healthier alternative to steroids, but they're not perfect. More research is necessary to determine how to consume SARMs for safe and powerful results.

The future is looking bright when it comes to these muscle-boosting miracle compounds.

Not quite ready to join the SARMs movement? If you're looking for the hottest tips and tricks for fitness, health, travel, money, leisure, and more, check out our other content!

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