

Frequently Asked Questions

How are ATLAS and ATHENA Implemented?

ATLAS and ATHENA usually occur during the sport season within the team setting. The programs are student-athlete (squad leader) led and performed in small groups of five student-athletes, referred to as squads. Both programs are coach facilitated, highly scripted and interactive, with each session lasting 45 minutes. ATLAS involves ten sessions, while ATHENA has eight sessions. The sessions are easy to implement and fun to do.

Why do ATLAS and ATHENA work?

ATLAS and ATHENA use the positive influence of coaches and peers to help athletes work toward healthy goals. Both programs are implemented within the sport team, where coaches and teammates often have years of ongoing contact and can greatly influence healthy behaviors. The positive peer and coach pressure, and interactive, entertaining activities makes learning fun.

Why is the curriculum of ATLAS and ATHENA somewhat different?

Young men and women use drugs and alcohol for different reasons, thus much of the content of ATLAS and ATHENA is gender-specific.

For example, the nutrition portions of ATLAS focus on the protein and calorie needs for the young male athletes because they are at risk for using performance enhancing drugs to become bigger and stronger. ATHENA focuses on the protein and calcium needs for young women's muscles and bone strength without discussing calories.

What is the research behind ATLAS and ATHENA?

Drs. Linn Goldberg and Diane Elliot began investigating the reasons young athletes used anabolic steroids, alcohol and other drugs and how to prevent their use in 1987. Since that time their research has involved over 7,500 high school students. After developing potential strategies, they applied for and received two independent research grants from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Those programs, now known as ATLAS and ATHENA, have undergone randomized controlled evaluations involving over 4,000 student-athletes in more than 50 high schools. The results of the programs are published in leading medical journals, including the Journal of the American Medical Association and the Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine.

Today ATLAS and ATHENA stand out as the only proven effective athlete health promotion and drug prevention programs and have been disseminated to 30 states and Puerto Rico. More than 60 high schools have used the programs. After ATLAS was initiated in the Salt Lake City School District, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy stated that, "*[ATLAS is] responsible for declining trends in substance abuse among student-athletes during 2002.*" Salt Lake City Mayor Anderson stated, "*These results show what can happen when*

you implement programs with a proven track record of success. ATLAS is making a difference, giving our young people brighter futures and, perhaps, saving lives." After ATLAS was implemented in Lexington High School (Massachusetts), coach Mitch Finnegan stated, "[the] freshman reported no use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs....[the] freshmen team was the best freshmen team we've ever had....[the] varsity was the best team we've had in 10 years."

ATLAS **(Athletes Training & Learning to Avoid Steroids)**

ATLAS is a drug prevention and health promotion curriculum that the coach and team members carry out together during the sport season. The sessions are scripted, which makes the program easy to use. For most of the activities, players teach each other and learn how to eat right and train more effectively. They discover how to become bigger and stronger without resorting to steroids or other performance enhancing substances.

Throughout ATLAS, young athletes learn how alcohol, marijuana and other drugs can harm their sport performance, and reduce the team's chances to succeed. The program stresses how to use sports nutrition and strength training as healthy alternatives.

ATLAS was studied in over 30 schools with support from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). After using ATLAS, students believed they were better athletes, thought their teams were a better source of information, felt more vulnerable to the harm of steroids and other drugs and had less desire to use steroids in the future. In addition, ATLAS trained students reported,

- 50% reduction in new alcohol and illicit drug use
- Over 50% reduction in new anabolic steroid use
- 24% reduction in drinking and driving
- 40% reduction in use of supplements
- Improved nutrition and exercise behaviors
- Students believed they were better athletes

ATHENA **(Athletes Targeting Healthy Exercise & Nutrition Alternatives)**

After ATLAS was shown to be successful, the next step was to develop a program for young women athletes. This required tailoring a curriculum for high school female athletes, who have unique risk and protective factors, different from their male counterparts. As one prominent scientist stated, "ATHENA is not just ATLAS in skirts."

To design ATHENA, we studied more than 2,000 female students' beliefs and behaviors from sixteen schools, to discover which areas to focus the program.

Once developed and pilot tested, ATHENA was studied with nearly 800 young women athletes from 40 sport, cheerleading and dance teams at eighteen high schools.

Coaches and their assigned student squad leaders use scripted lesson plans, while other team members have matching workbooks. All receive pocket-sized Athletes Guides containing drug, nutrition and strength training information.

ATHENA trained students were better able to control their mood, refuse drug offers and were less influenced by unhealthy media depictions of women. In addition, ATHENA athletes reported,

- Reduced use of alcohol, and marijuana
- Less use of steroids, amphetamines, and supplements
- Reduced use of diet pills
- Less riding in a car with a drinking driver
- Less new sexual activity
- Improved nutrition behaviors
- Fewer injuries
- Long term reductions of diet pills, alcohol and marijuana

For more information, contact:

Center for Health Promotion Research
Oregon Health & Science University
3181 SW Sam Jackson Park Road, Mailcode CR 110
Portland, OR 97239-3098
503-494-3727, 503-494-4516
chpr@ohsu.edu
www.atlasprogram.com