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Ephedra – Is It Safe And Effective?

By Nick Nilsson

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Burn fat while you sleep! Eat whatever you want and still lose weight! Don't suffer through hours of grueling exercise to burn fat!

You've probably heard all these phrases before but are the fat burners containing ephedra that these claims are attached to really that effective and are they safe?

The primary ingredient in fat burners is the herb ephedra, also known as ma huang, or it's manufactured version ephedrine. It has been used in Chinese herbal medicine quite safely and effectively for thousands of years. It is often combined with synthetic or herbal versions of caffeine (e.g. guarana, yerba mate or kola nut) and aspirin (e.g. white willow bark).

But does it burn fat?

The answer to that question is yes. Ephedra does effectively help the body to preferentially burn fat for energy. But, according to medical studies, there can be side effects, some of which are quite serious.

Ephedra works to burn fat through several means.

–Its chemical makeup increases the breakdown of fatty tissue for fuel. –Its stimulatory properties help to increase resting metabolism. This process is known as thermogenesis, which is essentially excess heat production. You body burns more calories simply by producing more body heat. –When ephedra is combined with caffeine and aspirin, it may have appetite suppressant effects. –The nervous system stimulation you get can help you maintain your energy levels, which can aid you in your exercise program.

When used according to instructions and in moderate doses, studies suggest that fat-burning formulas containing ephedra, caffeine and aspirin can be safely and effectively used to SUPPLEMENT a good

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fat-burning program.

Fat burners should never be used as the sole means to achieve fat loss. A good fat loss program must also address diet and exercise, contrary to the hype you see on television and in print. Anyone who relies solely on pills to lose fat is usually doomed to regain the lost weight and potentially quite rapidly after they stop taking the pills.

There is a reason for this weight gain. These pills are effective, therefore the person does not necessarily have to change the habits that made them overweight in the first place. When a person discontinues use of ephedra without changing those habits, almost inevitably the weight will come back.

The fat-burning effects of ephedra do not come without a price, however. Ephedra has a number of side effects and should not be taken by people with certain conditions.

Some of these side effects may include: jitteriness, sleeplessness, increased heart rate and blood pressure, anxiety, skin flushing or tingling and nausea.

People who should not take ephedra include those suffering from heart disease, anxiety attacks, high blood pressure, diabetes, adrenal disease, thyroid disease or prostate disorders. If you are taking medication for high blood pressure or are taking antidepressants or MAO inhibitors, you should stay away from ephedra. Also, it is not recommended for pregnant women to use this herb.

Now that you know some of the pros and cons of taking ephedra supplements you, along with your doctor, can use this information to help decide whether or not ephedra is right for you.

For more information on fat loss and exercise, visit

Nick Nilsson is Vice President of BetterU, Inc., an online exercise, fitness, and personal training company. Check out his latest eBook "The Best Exercises You've Never Heard Of" at

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The Right Focus on Tort Reform

By Richard Martin

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The recent headlines about Merck's Vioxx withdrawal and the FDA's move to ban ephedra have brought a lot of media attention to the growing area of drug litigation.

On April 12, 2004 the FDA published a rule banning health supplements that contain ephedra alkaloids. The FDA concluded that the limited short term weight loss effects were outweighed by possible heart problems and stroke risks. The market gap caused by the banning of ephedra has been filled by many new companies that are marketing products similar to ephedra. However, these "ephedra alternatives" may not be any safer than the banned ephedra that they replace.

The FDA's ephedra ban, and Merck's Vioxx withdrawal have been hot news topics. These drug recalls and ephedra banning have brought lawsuits from many different angles. Obviously, some people think that some of the lawsuits will be frivolous. In fact, there has been a lot of news during the last decade about "frivolous lawsuits" brought by injured consumers against large companies for defective products. However, according to one report from Public Citizen (<http://www.citizen.org/congress/civjus/tort/myths/articles.cfm?ID=12369>), businesses file many more times the amount of lawsuits than consumers do and are more likely to be sanctioned by a court for bringing a frivolous claim.

State governments have enacted tort reform which has capped potential damages for certain types of claims in some states. George W. Bush's state of Texas implemented tort reform in 2003 to cap medical malpractice liability. George W. Bush has continued to push for tort reform nationwide since he took office.

The real question is, if businesses are the ones who are generally taking too much of our courts' time—why has there been such a push for individual tort reform? Is it possible that injured individuals are not a group of organized people with continuous business interests that actively lobby for tort reform? While frivolous lawsuits are a concern for everyone, shouldn't tort reform really focus on the parties who are bringing most of them?

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