



DIETARY SUPPLEMENT FACT SHEET

<http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Wellness.aspx>

Ephedra (*Ephedrine Sulfate*)

Also known as: Ephedra, Ephedra Sinica, Ma-huang, Desert Herb, Joint Fir, Poptillo, Sea Grape, Teamster's Tea, Yellow horse, Epitonin, Ephedrine, PPA

Historical Perspective: Ephedra Sinica is an herb which has been used in traditional Chinese medicine for over 5,000 years and is considered the world's oldest medicine. Healers have used this herb to treat asthma, coughs, colds, and induce sweating. Most naturally growing ephedra is found in temperate climates, in China, Mongolia, Southern Siberia and Japan, usually on sandy seashores. On Dec.30, 2003, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a consumer alert on the safety of dietary supplements containing ephedra. The alert advised consumers to immediately stop buying and using ephedra products. On April 12, 2004, FDA announced that the final rule went into effect prohibiting the sale of dietary supplements containing ephedra alkaloids (ephedra) because these supplements present an unreasonable risk of illness or injury. Copies of the consumer alert, notice letter to ephedra manufacturers, and press releases, and other documents about FDA's Actions on ephedra can be found at <http://www.fda.gov/oc/initiatives/ephedra/>.

Common Uses: Aid in weight loss, increase energy, sexual enhancement and produce euphoria. Ephedrine is used medicinally for the relief of asthma, allergies, colds, and hay fever (available in over-the-counter cold remedies).

Form(s) Used: The primary form of ephedra is in tablet or capsule form. Ephedra is not commonly available in its pure form, but in combination with several other ingredients -- other ingredients include caffeine in the following forms: guarana, guara concentrate extract, kola and kola nut. Stevia and garcinia cambogia can also be found in ephedra containing supplements.

Potential Side Effects: Ephedra may cause addiction, headache, insomnia, nervousness, agitation, dizziness, vomiting, difficult urination, manic episodes, kidney stones, hepatitis, high blood pressure, heart palpitations, tachycardia, heart attack, stroke and death. Side effects of ephedra use are often intensified by the other ingredients commonly available as an additive to the product, such as caffeine.

Food-Drug-Supplement Interactions: MAO inhibitors, digoxin, caffeine, over-the-counter cold remedies, and stimulants.

Contraindication to Use: Pregnancy, breast feeding, Graves' disease, high blood pressure, heart disease and obesity.

Research Data on Safety and Efficacy: Case studies on hundreds of individuals indicate that ephedra and ephedra-containing products are not safe for use. The FDA lists ephedra as a potentially dangerous supplement on its warnings and safety information page, and has proposed safety measures for manufacturers of ephedra-containing products. Many sport associations, including the International Olympic Committee, have banned ephedra use.

Bottom Line: Ephedra is not recommended for use due to its serious, life-threatening side effects. It is illegal for manufacturers to sell and distribute dietary supplements containing ephedra.

continued on next page



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