

Food and Drug Administration
Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition
Office of Special Nutritionals

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June 24, 1997

Ms. Margaret C. Binzer
Consumer Safety Officer
Office of Special Nutritionals
HFS-456
200 C Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20204

Dear Peggy:

After speaking with you over the phone last week and reading the Proposed Rule on Dietary Supplements containing Ephedrine Alkaloids, I feel it is necessary to share with you my experience with ephedrine. I am currently a 38 year female.

I began taking a herbal weight loss product Be Thin Again in January, 1995. I was instructed to take 2 tablets at 10:00 am and 1 at 3 pm. I was also told it would not harm me to take as many as 5 tablets per day and that the product was completely safe and did not have any harmful side effects. My fiancé also began taking the product. He was taking the same dosage - 3 per day.

Upon first taking the product I noticed my senses were greatly heightened, my heart raced and I literally felt "high". I had tons of energy and my appetite was greatly reduced. It almost seemed I was in a euphoric state. I thought, "this is too good to be true. I'm going to lose weight and feel good too." After using the product consistently for 2 weeks my appetite was so reduced that I would often not eat for 6 to 8 hours at a time, but I was losing weight so I thought this was great.

My first month I lost 15 pounds. I continuing taking 3 tablets per day, sometimes 4 for 2 more months. The "high" feeling continued as well as the extra energy. However, after the 3rd month, my weight loss seemed to slow down and I couldn't feel the energy as much. I was told that since I didn't have a lot more weight to lose my body needed extra help. I was instructed to increase my dosage to 2 or 3 tablets at 10:00 am and 1 or 2 at 3:00 pm. I tried taking 3 tablets at 10:00 am and my heart raced so quickly, I was actually scared. Instead of 2 at 3:00, I waited and took 1 at 4:00 pm and 1 at 6:00 pm. Spacing them out seemed to work better, however I was unable to go to sleep until after 1:00 am in the morning. I felt I could deal with the lack of sleep, so I decided that I would space out the time that I took the product. My fiancé continued taking the product.

I began taking 5 tablets daily. I would take 1 then wait 2 or 3 hours and take the next one. My sleeping patterns remained the same but my weight loss had slowly begun again. I began noticing that my hands would shake for no apparent reason. I also seemed more on edge than before. I would often get very upset over small trivial things. I seemed to have less and less patience and would often snap back at others. I

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didn't realize it at the time, but my personality was changing.

My goal was to lose more weight so I continued taking the product. After another month, it felt as though there was a huge gray cloud over me. I had become a "depressed" person but did not know it. Additionally, I noticed my heart felt as though it was skipping a beat. At first this happened only once a month, maybe twice. So I thought that perhaps this was normal.

I continued taking the product because I was told if I wanted to lose weight I needed to continue taking the product...that I just needed to get over this plateau. I was now taking at least 5 tablets per day. My fiancé was still consistently using the product also. He, like myself, was taking at least 5 tablets per day. My mood swings were daily, even hourly. I would be extremely happy one minute then deeply somber the next. My temperment, and my fiancé's, was altered severely. He and I were arguing constantly. I couldn't remember things and had difficulty making decisions. We almost ended our engagement on several occasions. We actually had deteriorated to verbal and sometimes physical abuse with each other. (Neither of us has a family history of abuse or violence, nor were we treating each other this way prior to taking this product.) I even entertained the idea of what it would be like if I weren't in this world anymore.

My heart was now skipping a beat, sometimes daily, but at least once every 3 days. On several occasions my heart would pound and my left arm felt as though it was going numb. I would break out into a sweat and feel weak. I continued taking the product because now I realize, I was addicted to it. If I missed a dose, I would feel exhausted and "weird". I rationalized my decision to continue taking the product because I felt I was basically a healthy person, but was just going through some difficult times. Wrong.

I finally wised up and realized there was something wrong with me. I stopped taking the product in August of 1996. **I WILL NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PRODUCT WHICH CONTAINS EPHEDRINE ALKALOIDS IN MY LIFE!**

In retrospect, I believe that if I had continued to take the Be Thin Again it would have killed me. Prior to taking the Be Thin Again, I was a healthy, happy normal individual with no prior serious medical or psychological problems. I was just a person who wanted to lose 35 pounds.

It has taken me 9 months to completely rid all of the ephedrine from my body. I am now "normal" again, a lot wiser, and looking forward to taking my wedding vows in June, 1998! I am glad to see the FDA is researching this alkaloid. I am forwarding a sample of this product and a label for your use. I am very interested in receiving a copy of your analysis of this product. I have acquaintances who are still using this product. Please pass your ruling soon.

Thanks again for your efforts in controlling this substance.

Sincerely,

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