

The New Jersey Poison Information & Education System — Serving New Jersey Since 1983

## ***MEDIA ALERT***

Media Contacts:

800-222-1222 (800-962-1253 outside NJ)

### **This Year I RESOLVE to Lose Weight**

-- Buyer Beware: Poison Experts Warn about using Dietary Supplements --

Steven Marcus, MD, Executive and Medical Director,  
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New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (NJPIES)

*Available for Interviews*

(Newark, NJ) – January 15, 2014 — Did you vow to eat better and exercise more in hopes of losing weight in 2014? If yes, the NJ Poison Experts urge you to beware of the possible dangers of using dietary supplements as a quick fix. They aren't always what they seem.

Many of these supplements promise a short cut to reaching your goals, but you may also be putting your health at risk. Thousands of dietary supplements are sold in the U.S. today at retail stores, health clubs, and on the Internet. Such supplements have landed otherwise healthy people in hospitals across the country. They may cause uncomfortable or unhealthy side effects either from the actual substances/contaminants in the products or potential interactions with other products or medications used by the consumer.

The most recent recalls/warnings from the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) have been issued for OxyElite Pro, Mass Destruction, Burn 7, and Anatabloc. Poison experts remind everyone, just because it's sold over-the-counter, doesn't mean it is safe. The FDA does not regulate the safety of these products before they are sold on the market.

The NJ Poison Experts were recently called upon to help in the care of a 19 year old female who had to be transported to a local hospital by ambulance after suffering from a rapid heart rate, fainting and suffering a seizure. The patient reported using an over-the-counter, non-prescription, weight loss product. We discovered that this product contained a well known substance recalled by the FDA for its dangerous adverse effects.

"Increasing numbers of adults incorporate dietary supplements into their diets. This can be both good and bad news," said Dr. Steven Marcus, executive and medical director of NJPIES. "For some, dietary supplements will improve health, but for others they may cause health problems. Consumers need to heed warnings and be aware of all of the ingredients in the dietary supplement they take. Some ingredients can result in side effects, from diarrhea to racing heartbeat and more."

With the annual weight loss resolution season upon us, it is important to recognize that there is no magic bullet or diet supplement that will safely cause weight loss. Keep these tips in mind before using dietary supplements:<sup>1</sup>

- Avoid dietary supplements that you don't need.
- Select supplements with only the ingredient(s) that you need.
- Avoid supplements with more than one herbal ingredient.
- Consult your pharmacist or physician if you take prescription medications or have health conditions.
- Avoid supplements sold to "treat" an illness.

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<sup>1</sup> The Hidden Dangers of Dietary Supplements: <http://www.doctoroz.com/media/print/3764>

- Avoid supplements that claim to help you lose weight or improve your sexual or athletic performance.
- If you experience a side effect, stop using the supplement and inform your physician and the FDA.
- If you have any questions call the hotline and speak to a poison expert.

If you are planning on consuming a dietary supplement either prescription or over-the-counter, please contact your local pharmacist or the NJ Poison Experts at 1-800-222-1222 to find out how it might interact with other medications you may currently take. If someone is unconscious, not breathing, seizing/convulsing, bleeding profusely, difficult to arouse/wake up, etc. call 911 immediately, otherwise call the **NJ Poison Experts at (1-800-222-1222)**. Remember, calls are free and confidential and help is always available 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year, even during bouts of Mother Nature. Call 800-222-1222 to speak with a NJ Poison Expert. Help is available in more than 150 languages.

### **Help is Just a Phone Call Away!**

Don't waste valuable time looking up information on the Internet when every minute counts. "Many of the calls we get are genuine emergencies," said Dr. Steven Marcus, Executive and Medical Director of the NJ Poison Center. "Poisons and medicines may act very quickly. Having a poison expert give you exact instructions for your specific situation can help significantly during those critical first few minutes."

### **Real People. Real Answers.**

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#### **About NJPIES**

As New Jersey's only poison control center, the New Jersey Poison Information & Education System provides information on poison prevention and treatments. Chartered in 1983, NJPIES provides free consultation through telephone hot line services and the Web. Medical professionals such as physicians, registered nurses and pharmacists offer confidential advice regarding poison emergencies and provide information on poison prevention, drugs, food poisoning, animal bites and more. These specialists are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

NJPIES coordinates state poison education and research and is designated as the regional poison center by the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services and the American Association of Poison Control Centers. It tracks incidences of adverse reactions to food, drugs and vaccines in order to monitor potential public health issues and provide data to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. A division of the Department of Preventive Medicine and Community Health of the New Jersey Medical School of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. NJPIES has a state-of-the-art center located on the school's Newark campus. NJPIES is funded, in part, by the NJ Department of Health and the United States Department of Health and Human Services.

New Jersey residents seeking immediate information about treating poison emergencies, and those with any drug information questions, should call the toll-free hot line, **800-222-1222**, any time. The hearing impaired may call **973-926-8008**. For more information, visit [www.njpies.org](http://www.njpies.org) or call **973-972-9280**.

#### **About Rutgers**

Established in 1766, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is America's eighth oldest institution of higher learning and one of the nation's premier public research universities. Serving more than 65,000 students on campuses, centers, institutes and other locations throughout the state, Rutgers is the only public university in New Jersey that is a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences (RBHS) is the health care education, research, and clinical division of Rutgers University, comprising nine schools and their attendant faculty practices, centers, institutes and clinics; New Jersey's leading comprehensive cancer care center; and New Jersey's largest behavioral health care network.