

The Journal of Medical Toxicology Reviews Dangerous Diet Agents

The recent approval of lorcaserin by the FDA for the treatment of obesity, should serve as a reminder that nearly all weight loss agents are associated with adverse effects. A recent review of weight loss agents in the June issue of the Journal of Medical Toxicology highlights that there are certain weight loss agents with the potential to produce serious harm or even death.

Phoenix, Arizona ([PRWEB](#)) July 05, 2012 -- The Journal of Medical Toxicology (JMT), the official journal of the American College of Medical Toxicology (ACMT), highlights a [review of dieting agents](#) that can be dangerous and even deadly. According to the article, by Drs. May Yen and Michelle Burns-Ewald from Children's Hospital Boston, "In 2010 it is estimated that 75 million U.S. dieters spent nearly 61 billion dollars on weight loss products. Surveys have shown that 37% of children in grades 3-6 have already tried to lose weight with 6.9% having demonstrated dieting to the extreme." Several dangerous agents are reviewed in the article, including caffeine, ipecac, laxatives, and thyroid hormone.

"While we all know the epidemic of obesity is being fought every day, many don't realize the potential dangerous and even deadly effects of substances used for weight loss. And many can easily be ordered on the Internet," said Editor-in-Chief, Leslie R. Dye, MD.

For example, fenfluramine, one component of the infamous "fen-phen" combination, was removed from the market in 1997 after its association with significant cardiac valvular disease in its users. According to Lewis Nelson, M.D., the president of [ACMT](#) and one of the FDA panelists who recently debated the safety of the new weight loss agent lorcaserin (Belviq), "The mechanism of action of lorcaserin is similar to fenfluramine raising safety concerns as this newly approved medication becomes widely prescribed."

Other topics discussed in this review include stimulants like ephedrine and caffeine, and metabolic agents such as thyroid hormone and dinitrophenol. These agents are particularly dangerous in obese patients who often suffer from multiple underlying medical conditions such as hypertension and diabetes. These and other fad diets are often unstudied for either their efficacy or safety, and serious adverse effects may be missed or misinterpreted without systematic evaluation.

[Medical toxicologists](#), who are physicians with expertise in the diagnosis and management of adverse effects of medications, strongly warn against the use of unproven therapies. This is particularly true of those therapies that have a poor safety history or are similar in action to these medications.

ACMT is a professional, nonprofit association of physicians with recognized expertise in [medical toxicology](#). The College is dedicated to advancing the science and practice of medical toxicology through a variety of activities.



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