

# THIN AT ANY COST

By: Alejandra Serna

Everyone can recall a time when eating disorders were obviously abundant among teenagers. To loose weight as fast as humanly possible, or even faster, adolescents would do anything from regurgitating whatever they consumed to burning their taste buds to avoid tasting food. Other evident methods included fallacious diets in which one may only eat from a certain food group, such as meat or vegetables, and would eventually breakdown from malnutrition. However, today's society is not so lucky.

Now a days, when you sit across from someone at lunch and see them popping a pill, there's no way to tell if what their taking is a mild aspirin or a habitual dietary supplement. Before, it was evident if someone had an eating disorder, dually due to their conduct and eating habits. But now as teens are getting smarter and smarter, they are getting harder and harder to detect.

One of the biggest questions concerning dietary supplements is, "Well, are they safe?" The truth is that the only pills deemed safe by well-known organizations like the FDA, which include Meridian and Sibutramine, are only approved for the use of individuals who are seriously overweight. This is a condition where the weight problem is serious enough to produce cardiac or respiratory problems, which is not the case for the average diet pill user. "Studies show Sibutramine to help weight loss by 5% to 10%" says Robert H. Eckell MD, the VP of the American heart Association and adds, "But diet and exercise should still be a major part of the equation." Unfortunately, if these

warnings are not followed, the consequences may be worse than the mere gaining of weight that was lost when trying to get off the pill.

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instance, Elizabeth Rud was tried at Teesside Crown Court for theft, false accounting and other crimes. However, the real violation she committed was getting hooked on tenuate dospan tablets, a diet pill that provides boosts of super-human energy but also alter the user's state of mind. Luckily for Elizabeth, the court was lenient due to evidence of her addiction and she was sent to mandatory rehab.

Following the spirit of pills like Meridian, laxatives are not meant to aid the weight loss process, but to ease constipation by helping to loosen the bowels. Unfortunately, today's youth have found yet another use for the cleansing technique. By swallowing one single pill every couple of hours, this miraculous medicine absorbs a large amount of water and nutrients as it passes through the body. In the end, these simplistic tablets leave their consumer in a weakened state, by wiping out all sources of nourishment. However, as this

became more noticeable another trick was pulled out of the bag; stimulant laxatives appeared. These induce muscle contractions to provide a slight boost of energy with each pill. This way, someone's best friend could be dying slowly of malnutrition and no one is the wiser.

Although the laxatives might seem to be working at first, the corollaries are defiantly not good. Not only can the pills becoming habit-forming, but prolonged use of the drug can lead to the impairment of colon function or chronic diarrhea, which may result in death. The most ironic fact of all is the 1995 FDA released study announcing that laxatives do not reduce the absorption of calories since that action takes place in the small intestine and not the colon, the organ which laxatives affect. To think teens would go through all this trouble of hiding pills merely to keep the weight they have and acquire an even more serious problem. Now that's using your brain!

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