

Product No. 2: Over-the-counter transdermal weight-loss patch

FDA issued a warning letter to the marketer of the weight-loss product described here because it did not have an approved new drug application. Because of the newness of the dosage form—skin-delivery systems—FDA requires evidence of effectiveness, in the form of a new drug application, before the product can be marketed legally.

Time-Tested or New-Found Treatment

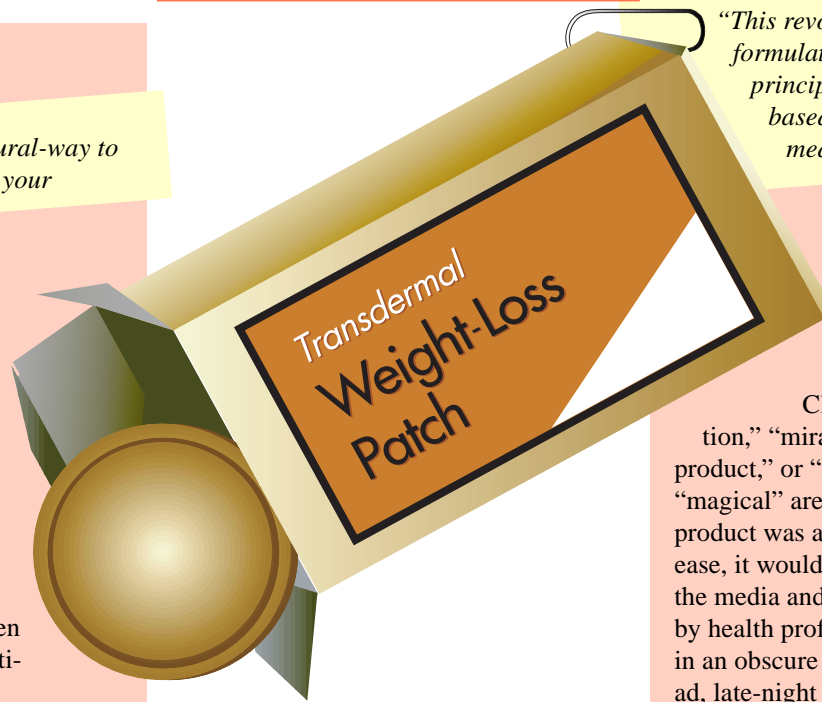
“This revolutionary innovation is formulated by using proven principles of natural health based upon 200 years of medical science.”

‘Natural’

“Healthy, simple and natural-way to help you lose and control your weight.”

Don't be fooled by the term “natural.” It's often used in health fraud as an attention-grabber; it suggests a product is safer than conventional treatments. But the term doesn't necessarily equate to safety because some plants—for example, poisonous mushrooms—can kill when ingested. And among legitimate drug products, says Shelly Maifarth, a compliance officer and health fraud coordinator for FDA's Denver district office, 60 percent of over-the-counter drugs and 25 percent of prescription drugs are based on natural ingredients.

Also, any product—synthetic or natural—potent enough to work like a drug is going to be potent enough to cause side effects.



Satisfaction Guaranteed

“... Guarantee: If after 30 days ... you have not lost at least 4 pounds each week, ... your uncashed check will be returned to you ...”

Here's another red flag: money-back guarantees, no questions asked. Good luck getting your money back. Marketers of fraudulent products rarely stay in the same place for long. Because customers won't be able to find them, the marketers can afford to be generous with their guarantees.

Usually it's one or the other, but this claim manages to suggest it's both a breakthrough and a decades-old remedy.

Claims of an “innovation,” “miracle cure,” “exclusive product,” or “new discovery” or “magical” are highly suspect. If a product was a cure for a serious disease, it would be widely reported in the media and regularly prescribed by health professionals—not hidden in an obscure magazine or newspaper ad, late-night television show, or Website promotion, where the marketers are of unknown, questionable or nonscientific backgrounds.

The same applies to products purported to be “ancient remedies” or based on “folklore” or “tradition.” These claims suggest that these products' longevity proves they are safe and effective. But some herbs reportedly used in ancient times for medicinal purposes carry risks identified only recently.