

FDA Deadline for public comments on Ma Huang April 7th
Be sure to give your comments on Ma Huang/Ephedra and
herbal regulation ASAP!

Comments may be sent to the FDA by:

FAX: 301-827-6870

E-MAIL: fdadockets@oc.fda.gov

MAIL: Dockets Management Branch HFA-305
Food and Drug Administration
5630 Fishers Lane, Room 1061
Rockville, MD 20852.

FDA Seeks Our Comments!

The Food and Drug Administration has called for public comment on the ephedra issue. The deadline for giving your feedback is April 7.

They specifically seek comment from "health professionals...and the general public." That's us!...and our patients, families, etc.

Please be aware that the Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act (DSHEA) of 1994--which defines herbs as "dietary supplements" and gives us access to them--is itself undergoing scrutiny. Public documents accessible via the FDA website contain statements such as, "We intend to establish an up-to-date public record for further legally sustainable regulatory actions...if DSHEA alone is not adequate, we have also asked for comments on possible legislative modifications to DSHEA to achieve this public health goal."

The DSHEA is not sacrosanct, and neither is our access. Please speak up now.

Ways to Get More Info

It's worthwhile to explore the FDA's website, to keep informed, understand regulatory issues, and get background information that we can use in letters to legislators and in conversations with our patients about ephedra and other herbs. You can also view the results of a study on ephedra, commissioned by the National Institutes of Health and just released last week by the RAND Corporation.

The main address for the website is:

www.fda.gov.

Specifically, also see: FDA press release at
www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/2003/NEW00875.html,

FDA "white paper" on ephedra

www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/ephedra/whitepaper.html,
Ephedra fact sheet

www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/ephedra/factsheet.html,
Summary of the RAND report

www.fda.gov/bbs/topics/NEWS/ephedra/summary.html.

For more on the Ma Huang Issue, visit these pages:

<http://www.asny.org/landl3903.asp>

<http://www.asny.org/landl31003.asp>

Thank You

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Banning this herb completely would reduce its casual, unguided use, but would also deny its safe and effective use by those working with licensed health care practitioners to improve their health in a responsible manner. Such a simplistic, broad-stroke solution does nothing to address the underlying issue: the appropriate use of natural medicine. It is like banning table saws or backyard pools because of an individual accident. It also would set a dangerous precedent: the banning of any natural medicinal that has the potential to cause harm when used improperly.

The Acupuncture Society of New York calls upon all elected officials to serve citizens by distinguishing between the casual and unguided use of ma huang in over the counter products, and its safe effective use by those who regularly choose treatment with acupuncture and Oriental medicine, by fully trained and licensed healthcare professionals, to care for themselves and their families. As interest in this form of healthcare continues to grow rapidly, its benefits will extend to many thousands who take a responsible approach to healthcare. Ensure that their treatment choices, and the treatments safely and responsibly employed by their practitioners, will be preserved for the future.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Written By:

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I Melina Manoukian support the responsible Use of Chinese Ephedra (Ma Huang). My contact information is:
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New York NY 10029

This statement is regarding the use and misuse of the herb ma huang, sometimes called ephedra. The Acupuncture Society of New York (ASNY) is the largest professional association of acupuncture and Oriental medicine practitioners and students in New York State. The practice of Oriental medicine often includes the use of herbs, and training in Chinese medicine includes the safe, appropriate, and effective use of Ma Huang.

However, the Acupuncture Society of New York opposes the improper or casual use of ma huang, and we ask all elected officials to ensure appropriate use of this valuable herb. We recommend that ma huang not be used commercially, but be restricted to professional use, to be dispensed by licensed health care professionals trained in the appropriate use of natural medicine.

Ma huang has been used safely and effectively in balanced herbal formulas for thousands of years, to treat such conditions as asthma and the common cold. In Chinese medicine it is not used for weight loss or as a nervous system stimulant, as it has been used in a variety of over the counter products. Such usage is inappropriate.

Like any medicinal agent, whether pharmaceutical or botanical, ma huang is safe and effective when used properly, and unsafe or ineffective when used improperly. The problem here is not the herb. The problem is its inappropriate and misguided use. Ma huang has been used for thousands of years, safely and effectively by practitioners of Chinese medicine, to treat conditions such as those characterized by wheezing or congestion. It has never been used as a stimulant or "thermogenic" weight loss agent. While the hope of easy weight loss is a powerful sales incentive, application of ma huang for this purpose is wholly inappropriate.