



**For Immediate Release**  
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### **Illinois Poison Center Warns Against Using Ephedra Despite FDA Ban Being Lifted**

**(Chicago)** – Despite a recent federal court ruling that allows ephedra-containing products to be sold again, experts at the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) cautions consumers against using any supplements with this ingredient. Ephedra has been linked to heart attacks, strokes and even death, which resulted in the FDA banning the substance in December 2003.

This warning comes at a time when people may be looking ahead to the summer bathing suit season and contemplating the use of dietary supplements to lose weight.

“Ephedra has stimulant-like effects on the body,” explained Dr. Michael Wahl, managing medical director, IPC. “Products containing ephedra can result in heart problems, increased blood pressure, stroke and even sudden death.”

Ephedra is often combined in diet or energy products with caffeine or a natural caffeine source such as kola nut, guarana, yerbe maté or tea. While the cautions for ephedra and caffeine are similar, ephedra has greater effects on the heart than caffeine. The combination of these two different types of stimulants can be especially powerful, and very dangerous.

In mid-April of this year, a federal judge of the U.S. District Court in Salt Lake City lifted the FDA ban, once again making the sale of ephedra as a food supplement legal. However, ephedra is still illegal in Illinois. Illinois was the first state in the country to ban the sale of the herb; this occurred in May 2003.

Consumers with questions or concerns regarding ephedra or any other herbal supplement should call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

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**Editor’s Note:** Wahl, who is also an emergency medicine physician, is available for news media interviews. Contact IPC public affairs at 312-906-6146 to arrange to speak with Wahl.

The Illinois Poison Center serves all of Illinois – 24 hours a day, 365 days a year – via a national, toll-free number, 1-800-222-1222. Staffed by pharmacists, physicians, nurses and poison information providers, the IPC provides poison prevention information and treatment advice on household products, medication issues, alcohol and drug misuse, bites and stings and other poisonings.

The IPC is a program of the Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council, an association comprising more than 140 hospitals and health care organizations working together to improve the quality of health care services in the Chicago area.