

MarkMonitor warns of the online availability of diet pills that can seriously damage your health

Submitted by: The Whiteoaks Consultancy

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As the value of the UK slimming supplement market tops £55 million*, research from MarkMonitor (<http://www.markmonitor.com>) - the global leader in enterprise brand protection - demonstrates the extent to which prescription slimming pills and illegal diet drugs can be bought online without a prescription and the potential consequences to the lives of Britain's young women – and increasingly, men.

The risks faced by users of these medications can include palpitations, miscarriage, kidney failure, heart attack, psychotic episodes and even death which is why it was so important that this type of medication should only be taken under prescription.

The illicit supply of appetite suppressants is helping to fuel a slimming obsession and those seeking a quick fix to weight problems – even slim women in pursuit of a 'size 0' figure – are turning to drugs available online that are either illegal in the UK without a prescription, or in some cases not intended for human consumption, therefore potentially putting their bodies and even their lives at risk. Industry experts* warn that use of these drugs is becoming more widespread than cocaine and heroin in some parts of the world.

With hundreds of new commerce and exchange sites selling slimming pills appearing every year, children as young as 11* are able to purchase potentially harmful drugs online with no regulations controlling their content or supply. Body image anxiety is known to affect children as young as ten; the fact that most British children of this age are proficient net surfers and that, from the age of 11*, they're able to have their own debit card, should make society very worried indeed.

Key findings

The study, conducted by MarkMonitor in November 2008 revealed the scale of the problem. Over a three day period in November, MarkMonitor found:

- 326 commerce sites selling or redirecting you to one or more of the drugs that are illegal to sell without a prescription in the UK.
- 377 listings on exchange sites offering large quantities of pills that are illegal to sell without a prescription in the UK with some even selling the active ingredient by the barrel load.

The search included 4 leading slimming drug brands and a drug not for human consumption yet commonly used as a slimming aid.

It is illegal to supply prescription-only medicines in the UK without a prescription.

"The global availability of counterfeit and illegal medicines has increased drastically in recent years through unregulated websites operating on the internet," says Charlie Abrahams at MarkMonitor. "This practice can only be reduced by brand and trademark owners effectively monitoring their online sales channels and ensuring that any non-authentic sites are closed down as soon as possible."

“Consumers are at greater risk than ever from online sales of questionable drugs such as these” he adds.

About MarkMonitor

MarkMonitor, the global leader in enterprise brand protection, offers comprehensive solutions and services that safeguard brands, reputation and revenue from online risks. With end-to-end solutions that address the growing threats of online fraud, brand abuse and unauthorized channels, MarkMonitor enables a secure Internet for businesses and their customers. The company’s exclusive access to data combined with its patented real-time prevention, detection and response capabilities provide wide-ranging protection to the ever-changing online risks faced by brands today. For more information, visit www.markmonitor.com.

*GMTV (<http://www.gm.tv/index.cfm?articleid=2285>)

*Industry experts = United Nations International Narcotics Board report, 2007, reported by BBC.

*Children from age 11 may hold a debit card, eg (but not restricted to) NatWest ‘Solo Cash Card’ available with ‘NatWest Adaptor Account’. Any person holding a valid debit/switch card is able to order products online

*Child counsellors worldwide have addressed girls as young as 10 year with anorexia and bulimia messages since the early 1990s. Channel 4 documentary: ‘Dana – the 8 year-old Anorexic’ aired 2 Oct 2008 and supports this

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