

Factoids

- ✓ Marijuana smoke contains as much or more of the cancer-causing chemicals found in tobacco smoke. —Oregon Prevention and Treatment Resource Clearinghouse
- ✓ Flu season is November to April. Flu shots are available to UO students at the Health Center starting today, October 14th, for \$6.
- ✓ The best way to ease uncomfortability due to nursing is to nurse more frequently.
- ✓ Allergy shots have been shown to reduce a person's asthma symptoms and reduce the need for asthma medications. —WebMD.org
- ✓ Allergy shots are not as effective against allergies to molds, and they are not recommended to treat food allergies. —WebMD.org
- ✓ 31 % of men and 35 % of women in the United States are obese. —Merck Manual, 2002
- ✓ By 2002, 10 % of the US population will have diabetes. —Diabetes Forecast, May 2002
- ✓ 40 % of people with social anxiety never get married www.psigrp.com/dgfd22.htm
- ✓ College students spend \$5.5 billion on alcohol each year, more than they spend on soft drinks, tea, milk, juice, coffee, or books combined.
- ✓ Women who have 2-5 drinks daily have a 1.5 times greater chance of getting breast cancer than women who don't drink.
- ✓ "Breastfeeding has some contraceptive effect, but only in the first three to four months—even then, it isn't 100 percent effective. Don't assume that because you're breastfeeding you can engage in intercourse without contraceptives—unless you want to be breastfeeding again in nine months." —Dr. Susan Love's Breast Book, Dr. Susan Love
- ✓ UO Students who have type I or II diabetes can consult with diabetes nurse Mary Jean Jacobson for advice on self care and medication. Call 346-2735 to schedule.
- ✓ 26 studies found that smoking cigarettes increases stress levels, even though most smokers claim that cigarettes help them cope with stress. —Health Magazine, October 2002

Pregnancy

and the University Health Center



By Carrie Zogoros

Gabi is a student on campus who is studying anthropology. She is also sexually active with her boyfriend of two years. This latter point is presently a concern to her since she should have started her menstrual period one week ago. She admits that she and her partner have been a bit careless lately and she could possibly be pregnant. She is very much in love and envisions having children some day, but is unprepared to be pregnant at this time in her life. Gabi is unsure of where to begin, who to turn to, and whether she should first consult a physician or use an over the counter pregnancy test. She is stressed out, cannot concentrate in class or at work. She feels tense when around her boyfriend. Gabi knows she needs to take action soon or she will drive herself crazy with the uncertainty.

Although fictitious, this is a situation that many heterosexually active women on this campus have either experienced, knows a friend who has, or can at least imagine themselves in.

First things first. Gabi would benefit from taking a deep breath because her fears may certainly be a false alarm. After a few relaxing breaths, she can begin to take action. A good place to start is an over-the-counter home pregnancy test. This is a urine test that detects human chorionic gonadotrophin hormone (hCG) present in a woman's urine. If this test is administered one week following a missed menstrual period, it is about 99 % accurate and reliable. The Health Center Pharmacy offers an at-home test called Quick Check Plus and it is sold without prescription for five dollars.

If the home test gives a positive result, a sensible next step would be to set up an appointment at the Health Center with a medical practitioner. Keep in mind the practitioner will ask the date of the last menstrual

period and date of unprotected sex. The practitioner would administer a urine test and give counseling and education regarding pregnancy. For example, because the Health Center offers no prenatal care, Gabi would be given references of local physicians, nurse practitioners and nurse midwives who provide pre-natal and obstetric care as well as pregnancy termination clinics in both the Eugene/Springfield area and Portland. The Health Center provides no recommendation regarding pregnancy termination, merely offers options to the pregnant woman so she can make an educated and thoughtful decision about her future as a possible mother.

For those who want children in the future, not now, and are heterosexually active there are many ways to prevent finding ourselves in the same situation as our fictional student, Gabi. Good news for most students is that many qualify for free contraceptive services at the Health Center, through the Family Planning Expansion Project (FPEP). If Gabi qualifies for this plan, she could receive the pregnancy test for free.

Through the FPEP grant, eligible men and women may receive birth control free of charge such as;

- Oral contraceptives
- Depo Provera
- Emergency contraception (Plan B)
- Cervical cap
- IUD
- Female condoms
- Vaginal spermicides
- Lunelle
- Condoms
- Ortho-Evra
- Diaphragm

For more information about whether you qualify for FPEP or to schedule an appointment at the Health Center, call 346-2770.

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Ephedra Considering the risks

By Katie Collins

A few months ago, I began experiencing some health problems. The symptoms were fairly mild; it began with trouble sleeping and a vague feeling of anxiety.

Chalking it up to being a busy college student, I wasn't too worried. When it progressed into fits resembling panic attacks with my heart always pounding, I finally decided to go to the University Health Center and see a physician. I learned I had brought it upon myself.

About a month before my visit I began taking MiniThins, an over the counter drug to help me concentrate and stay awake to study. They also decreased my appetite, so if I also lost a couple of pounds that was fine with me. I knew they contained caffeine, but I knew little about the other main ingredient—ephedrine—which turned out to be the cause of all my problems.

Ephedrine, the active ingredient of the ephedra plant, is very widely used for weight loss, as an energy booster, and to supposedly enhance athletic performance. It's found in many common dietary supplements, such as Easy Trim, Metabolife, Metabolite, and Ripped Fuel. Like myself, many people taking these pills have no idea of the harm they may be causing themselves. Similar to am-

phetamines, ephedrine targets the central nervous system and heart, leading to a wide range of physical side effects—some mild, some deadly. The most common are elevated blood pressure, rapid heart rate, anxiety, and insomnia, but more serious effects include: nerve and muscle damage, memory loss, strokes, and heart attacks.

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phes their labels can claim anything that a company desires to try and sell their product. One of the common marketing techniques is to label products as "herbal" and "natural," which is commonly assumed to mean safe. This misconception has led to injury and even death. Because there is no quality control, the herbs can be misidentified or contaminated with other substances.

If you are taking these supplements, the FDA has published guidelines for their use. They suggest the intake of no more than 24mg of ephedrine per day, in 8 mg increments every six hours, and to

discontinue use after no more than one week. It is also recommended to consult a physician, as pre-existing conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease or pregnancy can greatly increase one's risks. I would suggest asking yourself if dropping a few pounds, studying for a couple more hours, or having a great workout is really worth risking your life.

For more information, make an appointment with a practitioner at the University Health Center (345-2770) or drop by the Peer Health Education Office for more information on supplements, energy and fatigue, sensible weight loss, and stress-management.

