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Yohimbe is not recommended for treating erectile dysfunction.

Yohimbe is a tree native to West Africa. Yohimbine, an alkaloid derived from the bark of the tree, has been used for many years as an aphrodisiac.

Although widely used to treat erectile dysfunction before the approval of newer drugs, current guidelines do not recommend its use. In addition, yohimbine can cause many side effects, interact with many prescription drugs, and is not recommended for individuals with certain medical conditions.

What are the potential uses and benefits?

- To improve athletic performance
Evidence is lacking to support this claim.
- To treat sexual dysfunction
Several research bodies concluded that proof supporting yohimbine was based on weak evidence. Yohimbine is not currently recommended to improve sexual dysfunction.
- As a stimulant
Although yohimbine stimulates the nervous system, clinical data do not support its use.
- For weight loss
There are no data to support this use and yohimbe products are reported to have serious side effects and drug interactions.

What are the side effects?

High blood pressure, anxiety, nervousness, nausea, dizziness, rapid heartbeat, irregular heartbeat, heart muscle damage, sleeplessness, urinary problems, diarrhea, psychiatric symptoms

Case reports

- 6 Unrelated deaths caused by yohimbine overdose that could not be explained by any other condition.
- Severe pain and persistent erection in a 42-year-old man with complex medical history after taking yohimbe extract. A surgical procedure was necessary.
- Palpitations and severe high blood pressure in a 49-year-old man who used an herbal supplement containing yohimbine.
- Toxic effects including malaise, vomiting, loss of consciousness, and repeated seizures in a 39-year-old bodybuilder after taking a large amount of yohimbine.
- Skin eruption, kidney failure, and lupus-like syndrome in a 42-year-old man following treatment with yohimbine for impotence.

What else do I need to know?

Patient Warnings:

- Yohimbine can interact with numerous drugs and cause serious adverse effects.
- Do not use if you have high blood pressure, heart disease, arrhythmias, Parkinson's disease, seizures, kidney, thyroid, or liver disease, sexual organ inflammatory disorders, ulcers, or psychiatric disorders.
- Do not take with antidepressants or foods high in tyramine such as cheese, red wine, and liver, or with decongestants, diet aids, or phenylpropanolamine-containing products.
- An analysis of 49 yohimbine supplement brands sold in the US showed that only 4% provided accurate information about the quantity of yohimbine and known adverse effects.

Do Not Take if:

- You take antianxiety agents: Yohimbine may reduce their effectiveness.
- You take antidepressants: Yohimbine may increase their side effects.
- You take blood pressure medications: Yohimbine may lessen their effects.
- You take CYP2D6 substrate drugs: Yohimbine may affect how these drugs are metabolized.
- You take bupropion: Coingestion with yohimbe products can result in toxic effects.
- You take opioids: Yohimbine may cause withdrawal and anxiety symptoms.
- You are pregnant or nursing: Yohimbine may cause serious side effects.
- You have cardiovascular, liver, or kidney disease: Yohimbine may cause serious side effects.
- You have high blood pressure: Yohimbine can raise blood pressure so taking it may compound the problem.
- You have psychiatric conditions including PTSD, anxiety, bipolar disorder, depression, mania, schizophrenia: Yohimbine may make your condition worse.
- You have an enlarged prostate or sex organ inflammation: Yohimbine may make your condition worse.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Yohimbe - Last updated on December 17, 2021

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