TRIBULUS

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TRIBULUS TERRESTRIS AS AN INGREDIENT IN DIETARY SUPPLEMENTS  
  
Tribulus (Tribulus terrestris L.) is an herbal plant, also known as caltrop and puncture vine. It s been used in traditional medicine for a variety of potential health benefits such as pain, inflammation, heart-related problems, and high blood pressure. It s also promoted for general well-being, vitality, and mood. Today it s commonly found as an ingredient in dietary supplements marketed to boost testosterone and enhance sexual (libido) and athletic performance.  
  
No strong evidence supports the marketed claims that Tribulus can enhance sexual and athletic performance. Its safety as a dietary supplement ingredient is not yet fully understood.  
  
The dietary supplement ingredient Tribulus is prepared from the leaves, root, and fruit of the Tribulus terrestris L. plant, which contains numerous chemical compounds, including steroidal saponins (plant steroids). The plant itself is known to be toxic to rats and sheep after ingesting large amounts. Effects include damage to the heart, liver, and kidneys.  
  
Is Tribulus safe for humans?  
Research evaluating the safety of Tribulus in humans is limited. More research is needed to determine the safety of Tribulus as a dietary supplement ingredient, especially long term and in varying doses.  
  
Short-term studies (up to 3 months) have reported few adverse effects, such as stomach cramps and nausea.  
Sleep disturbances, exhaustion, fatigue, and elevated heart rate have been reported after consuming more than 1,000 mg per day.  
A case report in LiverTox describes a man suffering acute liver and kidney damage after taking Tribulus, but it is unknown if the damage was actually due to Tribulus.  
What are the effects of Tribulus on athletic performance?  
Some small-scale studies have examined the effect of Tribulus on athletic performance in populations such as rugby players and CrossFit athletes. Overall, these studies do not show any significant improvements in body composition (muscle or body mass), strength, or exercise performance.  
  
What are the effects of Tribulus on sexual performance?  
Some studies suggest that Tribulus might increase testosterone levels and improve erectile and sexual dysfunction. However, clinical trials involving men report mixed results when Tribulus was used to increase testosterone levels or improve erectile dysfunction. Likewise, some clinical trials suggest that Tribulus might improve sexual function for women suffering from low libido or hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD). Overall, however, larger and more in-depth studies are needed to confirm any of these effects in humans.  
  
Will Tribulus cause a positive drug test? Is it prohibited for Service Members?  
Tribulus is not on the DoD Prohibited Dietary Supplement Ingredients List, and it shouldn t cause a positive result on a routine military drug test. When considering any dietary supplement product, look for those displaying a third-party certification seal.