



Bennett, Coleman & Co. Ltd.

APRIL 28, 2013 | CAPITAL | PAGES 84 | INCLUDING TIMESLIFEI, CLASSIFIEDS, DELHI TIMES AND SOUTHERN EDUCATION REVIEW | TIMESOFINDIA.COM | EPAPER.TIMESOFINDIA.COM

OF INDIA

PRICE ₹5.00 OR ₹9.00 WITH SUNDAY

* SUNDAY TIMES OF INDIA, NEW DELHI
APRIL 28, 2013

Girls popping 'get fat' pills for curves

Risk Cancer, Heart Diseases

Maria Akram | TNN

New Delhi: Most young women in the country try desperate ways to lose weight, but there's also a section that strives equally hard to look "filled-up" for their husbands and lovers — in keeping with the male fantasy of the Khajuraho women. Often with disastrous consequences.

Weight gain pills, sold furtively over the counter and mostly without a prescription, can cause severe complications in both mothers and their would-be babies. One woman from Kolkata TOI spoke to said her child was born without limbs. She, however, could not tell if it was the effect of the medicines she was taking to get fat.

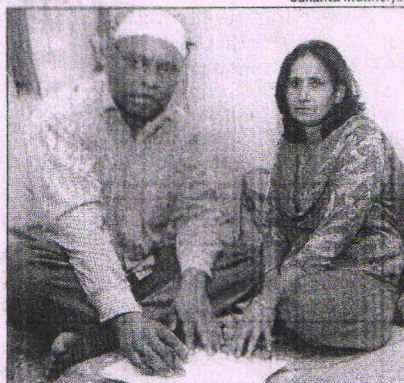
It is a strange anomaly, say doctors, that in this day of size zero aspirations there exists a group that wants to add kilos to their frame. While some thin women are convinced by their mothers that their bodies aren't 'developed' enough, others claim their husbands prefer plump women. Sarita, for instance, a resident of Kolkata, says men don't like skinny women. So she took Practin, an antihistamine, on her mother-in-law's advice to gain weight. What she doesn't know is that these medicines — be it Practin, Decdan, Betnesol or Deca Durabolin — can cause great harm.

Dr Ambrish Mithal, former head of the Endocrine Society of India, says there is no scientific method to gain weight. "If a woman is healthy but thin, we prescribe her food supplements and put her on a high calorie diet. Most medications to gain weight are steroids taken as a last resort in

certain medical conditions. Practin is an anti-allergic which stimulates appetite. It shouldn't be taken just for weight gain."

Further, these medicines cause salt and water retention, leading to bloating. It makes people gain weight instantly, says Dr Sanjeev Bagai, consultant nephrologist. The Drug Controller General of India doesn't approve any allopathic weight-gain pills, adds Dr K K Agarwal, national vice-president elect, Indian Medical Association.

Sukanta Mukherjee



BITTER PILL: Shafi-ur Rehman and Rani

These medicines can lead to blood pressure, cataract, liver cancer, heart problems, osteoporosis and infertility. If a woman takes it during pregnancy, the baby can have deformities, warns Bagai. Plus, these pills are cheap and a month's supply comes for Rs 100-150 a month.

Shafi-ur Rehman, who works with a hospital in Kolkata, now knows the harm they can cause. He was shocked recently on finding that his wife had taken seriously his jokes about her weight. "One day when I noticed she was literally bloating, she told me about the tablets she had been taking. Now she keeps falling ill."

(Inputs from Shobha John in Delhi and Pratibha Masand in Mumbai)