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Asthma Drug Can Fight Fat

Researchers at Melbourne's Garvan Institute of Medical Research found the drug formoterol, used to treat asthma and lung diseases, increases metabolism and fat burning in adults.

"Research in animals has shown that formoterol can stimulate the growth of muscle and the burning of fat," said the study's lead author Dr Paul Lee.

"This is the first study demonstrating this metabolic effect in humans. Energy rate was increased by more than 10 per cent and fat burning was increased by close to 25 per cent."

Theoretically, that means an average 70kg man could burn an extra 200 calories a day, Dr Lee said.

Other medications that increase metabolism often increase the heart rate, which can be dangerous, but the asthma drug, which has been in use for 10 years, had no effect on the hearts of the men in the study.

Dr Lee said the results of the study, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council are preliminary findings but have caused much interest in the medical community because of the drug's potential for addressing obesity. "This is an important discovery as it suggests that formoterol may be used to prevent obesity and muscle loss in humans," Dr Lee said.

Dr Lee said a larger study needed to be done on the drug's weight loss ability, and his team is planning to study anti-ageing effects on the elderly, where muscle loss and muscle wasting are common. "Given the benefits we see in protein metabolism in our study, our hypothesis is that formoterol may prevent or treat muscle loss and frailty."

Dr Lee said he had concerns the drug may be misused or abused by body builders.

– *The Sunday Telegraph*, Jane Hansen

FEATURED PRODUCT

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