Ephedrine and its chemical cousins are derived principally from a Chinese plant called ma huang. It is found in quite a few products such as Energy boosters that are legally sold, as well as in tablets and capsules. It is normally taken orally, but can also be snorted, which is painful and unpleasant. Ephedrine's actions is similar to that of adrenaline. It's effects, although less powerful, are more prolonged. Users have reported increased energy levels; heightening of the mood and strange tingling sensations on the skull. It's also like amphetamine (speed), but much weaker. Amphetamine effects the brain more directly whereas ephedrine is more physical. One's body has a bell shaped response curve to ephedrine i.e. Twice as much won't make you twice as wired.

There are four different members in the ephedrine family. The different forms vary in the effects they show predominantly: Nor-pseudo-ephephedrine, nor-ephedrine and ephedrine shows amphetamine-like effects mostly. Nor-pseudo ephedrine can be found in over the counter drugs such as Thinz, which is an appetite suppressor. It is derived from Khat, a leaf chewed by many people in countries such as Ethiopia, Somalia and Kenya.

Pseudo-ephedrine, the forth member, is weaker than the others but still exhibits amphetamine-like effects and has similar dangers. Its main effect is decongestion due to its vasoconstrictor effect. While this can promote drying of the mucous membranes, it can actually precipitate things like a runny nose if one is suffering from congestion. Sinumed, a hay fever and sinus treatment, contains this.

Ephedrine acts as a stimulant and can cause rapid or irregular heartbeats. Because it's legal, many people use it, thinking it a totally safe alternative. However, this is not totally correct. Ephedrine dilates the bronchial muscles, contracts the nasal mucosa, raises the blood pressure, and is a cardiac stimulant. Although these drugs may produce psychological and physical stimulation to athletic performance, they produce adverse physiological effects. They may induce an aggressiveness, anxiety and tremor which can lead to poor judgment, potentially placing you at risk of injury. Heart rate and blood pressure can be increased causing dehydration and decreased circulation. Complications from these adverse effects may result in strokes and heart irregularities, that can result in cardiac arrest and even death.

Users have also reported that a dependency can develop through regular use.

If mixed with Ecstasy: it can put an enormous strain on your body, and the sensory blocking
effects of Ecstasy will not let your mind know what's happening. This could be fatal, especially if used by people with high blood pressure or any heart problems.