

QUEENS

# Diet pills gave Queens woman insomnia, put her in mental hospital: lawsuit

**Army Reservist Sainah Theodore alleges that she suffered insomnia after taking Natural Lipo X, causing her to argue with strangers, stop her car in the middle of an intersection and stab pillows.**

BY OREN YANIV / NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2014, 12:06 AM



CHRISTIE M FARRIELLA FOR NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Sainah Theodore (left, with her lawyer Brian Pascale) is suing Brooklyn-based Natural Health Food Center.

She wanted to lose weight but instead lost her mind.

A Queens Army Reservist who took fat-burning pills spiked with illegal stimulants suffered insomnia that caused her to act so bizarrely she was committed to a mental hospital, according to a shocking lawsuit.

At the height of her sleep deprived delirium, Sainah Theodore, 26, got into arguments with strangers, stopped her car in the middle of a busy intersection and finally tore a screen door at her home and stabbed pillows and pictures until medics had to be called, her lawyer Brian Pascale said Wednesday.

"I couldn't believe all of this happened to me. It was a blur. I had no recollection of my behavior," said Theodore, a sociology student, emergency room clerk and Army Reservist.

In a lawsuit filed Monday in Brooklyn Supreme Court asking for unspecified damages, the Cambria Heights woman placed the blame with Natural Health Food Center in East New York.



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Theodore says Natural Lipo X initially caused to sleep lightly, but ultimately resulted in six days of complete insomnia.

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In December 2012, the health shop sold Theodore a product called Natural Lipo X - which she successfully used a year earlier.

But this time, she had to stop five days into the month-long regimen. After a few days of light sleep, she descended into six days of complete insomnia, court papers alleged.

By Dec. 19, she sent her mom irrationally aggressive text messages, told a friend she's hearing voices and ended up "causing total destruction of her home," Pascale said.

She spent the next five days in a mental institution and her upcoming deployment to Afghanistan had to be put on ice, possibly forever, she said. She later had to miss work and pay medical bills.



The Queens Army Reservist is suing the Natural Health Food Center in Brooklyn.

"Once I came out of the sedation, it was clear to me it was the pill that caused it," Theodore said.

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Lab tests of the capsules she took confirmed they contained high levels of caffeine, a laxative called Phenolphthalein that's restricted from over-the-counter meds and Sibutramine, a weight-loss stimulant that was banned by the FDA in 2010 due to a long list of side effects that includes sleeplessness, the suit stated.

None of these substances appeared on the Lipo X label, which boasted.

"It's a black market product, it's an illegal product," said Marc Ullman, another lawyer for Theodore who specializes in food and drug litigation.



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Michael McGuffin, president of the American Herbal Products Association, noted that adding undeclared ingredients to products is against the law.

Kennedy Angeliz, who said he is the store manager's son, claimed the insurance company indicated that Theodore was fasting while on the pills.

"We can't leave the store to see the customer eats well," he said. "The insurance is handling this. That's all I will say."

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Theodore's lawyer rejected that, saying she ate properly while taking the pills.

Industry insiders said that spiked supplements - which can enhance a pill's performance to meet its grandiose promises - are a known problem.

"Individuals who intentionally adulterate products with illegal and undeclared ingredients are not complying with current laws and regulations," said Michael McGuffin, president of the American Herbal Product Association. "The federal government and the regulated supplement industry work together to raise awareness about these tainted products."

Theodore said that is part of the reason she brought the suit.

"I just want people to have a warning," she said. "I wouldn't want somebody else to go through this."

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