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POSTED AT 1:13 PM EST Monday, December 16

Want tight abs? Do sit-ups

By ALLISON DUNFIELD
Globe and Mail Update

It's back to old-fashioned situps for the thousands of Canadians who ordered electronic muscle stimulators guaranteed to create rippled abdominal muscles out of flab.

The Competition Bureau announced Monday that consumers who bought two such devices via infomercials and the Internet will be allowed to return them for the full value after the bureau found that the devices made false claims.

Under a consent agreement with the Competition Tribunal, Thane Direct Canada Inc. (Thane) will fully reimburse all Canadians who bought the Abtronic and Abtronic Pro equipment.

This type of device uses electronic muscle stimulators (EMSs) and works by sending an electrical current through a muscle to make it contract, akin to the brain's own signal to a body part when it contracts a muscle.

Most of the at-home versions have their own a small, battery-operated EMS unit, about the size of a biscuit, strapped onto a belt that conducts the current. Depending on the machine, the user can control the intensity and delivery speed of the current.

Some paid as much as \$120 for the instruments under "the false impression

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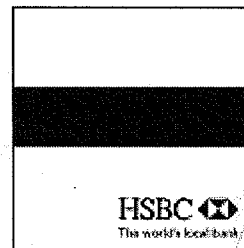
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that without performing any physical exercise, a person could lose weight, obtain an athletic physique with well-defined abdominal muscles, replace the workout benefits of a fully equipped gymnasium and increase their strength," a statement from the Competition Bureau says.

"Consumers are particularly vulnerable when it comes to unsubstantiated product performance claims, and more specifically when the claims relate to sensitive issues such as weight loss and physical appearance," Raymond Pierce, deputy commissioner of the Bureau, said in a statement.

The consent agreement was reached between the Competition Bureau and Thane after the bureau notified the company that it had begun an inquiry into its product.

Thane is also required to pay a \$75,000 administrative penalty.

Under the agreement, Thane promises not to sell or market the Abtronic or Abtronic Pro, or market any similar device that offers toning or weight loss without exercise "unless the Competition Bureau agrees that the claims are based on adequate and proper tests."

Anyone who purchased the products and wishes to get a full refund may do so by calling Thane at 1-800-978-6329.

With a report from Rebecca Caldwell

Delayed 20 minutes. [H](#)

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