

DH investigates illegal online sale of slimming products containing controlled drug ingredients (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (March 27) is investigating a case of illegal sale of slimming products containing undeclared controlled drug ingredients on the Internet and urged the public not to buy or consume the products concerned (see photo).

Acting upon intelligence, the DH purchased on a social media platform some slimming products, reportedly obtained from overseas, for analysis. The laboratory test results revealed that the samples of some products contained frusemide, metformin and thyroxine. All of them are Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138) (PPO).

The packages of the products concerned have Thai, Chinese and English characters, and are suspected to be unregistered pharmaceutical products. The DH will continue to follow up and investigate the case.

Frusemide is used for the treatment of heart diseases and its side effects include low blood pressure and electrolyte imbalance. Metformin is used for the treatment of diabetes mellitus and its side effects include nausea and diarrhoea. Thyroxine is used for the treatment of hypothyroidism and its side effects include arrhythmia and hypertension. Medicines containing these ingredients should be used under a doctor's directions and be supplied on the premises of an Authorized Seller of Poisons (i.e. pharmacy) under the supervision of a registered pharmacist upon a doctor's prescription.

According to the PPO, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products or Part 1 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The DH strongly urged members of the public not to buy or consume products of doubtful composition or from unknown sources. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX". The safety, quality and efficacy of unregistered pharmaceutical products are not guaranteed.

People who have purchased the products concerned should stop consuming them immediately and consult healthcare professionals if in doubt or if they feel unwell after consumption. They may submit the products to the Drug Office of the DH at Room 1804-06, 18/F, Wing On Kowloon Centre, 345 Nathan

Road, Kowloon, during office hours for disposal.

Weight control should be achieved through a balanced diet and appropriate exercise. The public should consult healthcare professionals before consuming any medication for weight control. They may visit the website of the Drug Office of the DH for "[Health message on overweight problem and slimming products](#)" and "[Slimming products with undeclared Western drug ingredients](#)" for information.

