

[Press release: New research shows desperate dieters in danger – the secret world of online slimming pills](#)

Online sellers of potentially dangerous slimming pills containing withdrawn pharmaceutical ingredients are putting desperate dieters' health at serious risk by seducing them with the promise of quick-fix weight loss and discreet deliveries that bypass discussions with their GP and pharmacist, new research reveals.

One in three slimmers have tried slimming pills purchased online, according to the joint #FakeMeds survey of 1,805 slimmers by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency and Slimming World. Since April 2013, the Agency has seized nearly £4 million worth of dodgy weight loss pills.

Three quarters of slimmers (77%) were enticed by promises of rapid weight loss, more than half were attracted to being able to order discreetly (57%) and more than four in ten (44%) ordered online because they didn't want to speak to a GP or pharmacist, the survey revealed.

However, almost two-in-three (63%) suffered unpleasant side effects after taking slimming pills bought online. These side effects included diarrhoea, bleeding that wouldn't stop, blurred vision and heart problems. Worryingly, four out of five (81%) didn't report these side effects to anyone.

The potentially dangerous products seized by the Agency are not tested for safety and have been found stored in dirty, rat-infested warehouses and garden sheds. In 2016, MHRA seized more than 4.6 million fake medical products and closed more than 5,000 websites selling medicines illegally.

Four out of 10 respondents said they had used the slimming pills knowing there were health risks, with more than six out of ten (62%) doing so because they were 'desperate to lose weight'.

Sarah-Jayne Walker, who became obsessed with slimming pills bought online before quitting her habit and eventually joining Slimming World, said: "I used to spend hours searching the web for what I thought were the right diet pills, ones that said they would work straight away and that had the best reviews. My mind became consumed with those pills...

"However, after suffering heart palpitations, IBS, sickness, light headedness and even fainting, I knew I had to get a grip and sort my mind out. I joined Slimming World at the end of May and it has been a revelation. I don't have to punish myself or feel guilty for eating anymore and I've lost just over two stone. The support has been amazing and I can't tell you how proud I feel of myself."

The majority of diet products are regulated as foods, however the MHRA

regularly seizes products that contain withdrawn pharmaceutical ingredients due to risks of heart attacks and strokes.

MHRA Senior Policy Manager, Lynda Scammell, said:

Quick fixes for losing weight may have serious health consequences in the short or long term, including organ failure and death.

It's essential you know what you're buying online and what the risks are. If you don't, your weight could end up being the least of your worries!

If you're looking to buy medicines online, check if the seller is registered by using our easy online checking system, www.gov.uk/fakemeds or check if they display the Distance Selling logo.

If you think you've bought fake medical products, please let us know via www.gov.uk/fakemeds. This way we can use the information to continue to seize these products and close websites that are putting public health at risk.

There are reputable groups out there that can support you to lose weight through healthy lifestyle changes. Your GP or healthcare professional will be able to advise you on finding the right option for you.

Jenny Caven, Slimming World's Head of External Affairs, said: "It's easy to see how quick fix promises made by the sellers of online slimming pills could seem tempting to people who are desperately struggling with their weight.

Buying slimming pills online can be incredibly risky though. The sellers are often unregulated and taking the pills puts people at risk of dangerous side effects. Learning to make changes to the way you shop, cook and eat and getting support to develop new healthy habits really is the best way to lose weight. Not only is it safer, it's also far more satisfying and has the added benefit that newfound habits can be passed on to the people around you too. Getting support makes your new habits more likely to stick in the longer term and you won't suffer any nasty side effects.

The #FakeMeds survey highlights how easy it is for people to buy potentially dangerous slimming pills online. Therefore, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency is working in partnership with Slimming World as part of the Agency's #FakeMeds

Campaign to encourage those wanting to lose weight to turn to safe, legitimate and appropriate routes.

The #FakeMeds campaign website has a range of easy and quick top tips to keep yourself safe online. www.gov.uk/fakemedes

If you would like to hear more about the healthy weight loss support that Sarah-Jayne experienced please visit www.slimmingworld.co.uk

[Press release: Regions say improved connectivity key to improving productivity](#)

Drawing on evidence from over 100 employers, local authorities and universities, HS2: Getting the best out of Britain, highlights the regional strengths of highly skilled manufacturing clusters, universities and research centres, and cutting edge technology entrepreneurs, but warns that more needs to be done to draw them together and realise their full potential in the modern economy.

David Higgins, Chairman of High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd, said:

This report is the evidence that HS2 will boost productivity in the North and Midlands. This is a once in a generation opportunity to join up and amplify the many centres of excellence around the country, as we prepare to exit the European Union.

By improving the connectivity between our major population centres, HS2 will give businesses access to the skills, labour and services they need to change the economic geography of the country.

The report shows that world-leading skills and research in the north and midlands can match that of London and the South-East. Cities and regions in the North and Midlands account for 32% of the UK's research staff working in universities with high quality research, compared to 35% in London and the South-East, and high quality universities produce thousands of graduates every year.

Despite this, employers in the North are still held back by a lack of access to skills, with 30% of businesses in Manchester citing lack of skills as a barrier to growth. At the same time London continues to attract graduates from around the country with nearly half of its population at NVQ4 qualification level or above, compared to a UK average of 37%.

The report, to be launched at an event in Nottingham today, demonstrates that by joining up the major conurbations around the country, HS2 will enable a greater pooling of people and capital around the regions of the UK. This connectivity will enable businesses in the North and Midlands to gain better access to new markets, investments, and become more globally attractive.

Chris Grayling MP, Secretary of State for Transport, said:

This study clearly shows transport investment is crucial to a strong and resilient economy. That's why we are investing in all forms of transport including the biggest rail modernisation programme for over a century to improve services for passengers, providing faster and better trains with more seats.

As Britain's new railway, HS2 will deliver vital links between some of our country's biggest cities, driving economic growth and productivity and helping to deliver the government's Industrial Strategy.

By bringing our major cities, regions and communities closer together we are encouraging business and innovation and building a Britain that is fit for the future with a stronger economy and fairer society.

In addition, the study finds that by bringing major cities closer together, HS2 would further support the distribution of the business and professional services market around the whole country, which makes up over 10% of the UK economy. With office costs up to 80% cheaper in the North compare to London, and salaries up to 40% lower, huge efficiency savings can be made. It is estimated that relocating a 50 person skilled legal back office from the City of London to Liverpool could achieve annual savings of £1 million.

Comparing London's highly-efficient transport network with the connectivity that exists within and between city regions in the North and Midlands, the study argues that there is a direct link between productivity and connectivity.

Sir John Peace, Chairman of Midlands Engine and Midlands Connect, said:

The Midlands economy is built on a strong advanced manufacturing base and is enhanced by a wide range of sectoral strengths, universities and research centres. Midlands Connect and Midlands Engine are seizing on the once in a generation opportunity HS2 brings to drive growth for the region, through improved connectivity within the region as well as beyond. We will create a thriving environment for businesses to flourish and HS2 is critical for us to do that.

HS2 is arguably the greatest business opportunity to hit the Midlands in decades, benefitting both the East and West Midlands

and collectively we need to be HS2-ready.

Richard Wright, Executive Director Sheffield Chamber of Commerce & Industry, said:

Sheffield, and the region around it, has a strong tradition as suppliers of products to manufacturers in other parts of the country, who produce export goods that the country relies on heavily. We are being held back by poor rail connectivity and capacity on routes to London, Leeds and Manchester in particular. HS2, properly integrated with the plans of Transport for the North, helps us address those issues.

Professor Clive Roberts, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education, University of Birmingham, said:

High Speed Rail has the potential to transform the regions and cities it interconnects. Lines in Taiwan, Korea and France have helped to distribute economic growth by attracting and helping to create new high value jobs through improved transport opportunities. The plans being put in place by HS2, local authorities and business communities will help ensure that similar success is achieved in Britain.

HS2 will serve around 30 million people and directly serve 25 stations, joining up the dots between where we are now, and where we could get to as a country. A combination of more capacity and better connectivity will improve accessibility, and, therefore, productivity in the North and Midlands at the same time as easing the pressure on London.

Press release: Welsh Secretary salutes the courage and excellence of the Armed Forces in Wales

The hard work and dedication of Wales' servicemen and women and those who support them will be recognised at the Armed Forces in Wales awards today (30 Nov).

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns will deliver a keynote speech and present the main award of the evening at the prestigious event in Cardiff City Stadium.

Now in their fifth year, the awards honour the accomplishments and professionalism of our servicemen and women, as well as employers and individuals who work tirelessly to support our Service personnel.

The awards are:

- Sports
- Youth and Cadet
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Armed Forces Award

The UK Government has put defence at the heart of its vision for a Global Britain. Earlier this year, the UK Government announced that the tenth Armed Forces Day national event in 2018 will take place in and around Llandudno in the borough of Conwy, North Wales. And with 2,000 troops and over 1,000 MoD civilian staff based here, Wales is at the heart of the UK's Defence.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

From the battlefields of Flanders to the deserts of Afghanistan, Welsh servicemen and women have served in our Armed Forces for the last century with distinction and commitment.

The Armed Forces in Wales Awards provide us with the opportunity to show our appreciation and pride for our soldiers, sailors and air personnel who sacrifice so much for others.

Our debt of gratitude also extends to the families and friends they leave behind but who contribute so much. I am privileged to have the opportunity to celebrate their invaluable contribution to the defence of our nation and I am humbled and honoured to be in their company this evening.

The event will also recognise employers who have made an outstanding commitment to support the Armed Forces.

The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards recognise employers who actively support the Armed Forces community in their workplace and also encourage others to follow their lead.

Mr Cairns added:

The companies nominated tonight have shown outstanding commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

They have taken meaningful steps to ensure the Defence community are not disadvantaged by the sacrifice they make in helping keep this country safe. The actions of these employers make it crystal clear that regardless of size, location, or sector, employing

people with military skills is good for business.

ENDS

Press release: PM's St Andrew's Day message: 30 November 2017

Scotland has a special place at the heart of our precious union of nations.

And today, on St Andrew's Day, it is right that we should come together to celebrate everything that Scotland stands for and all that Scotland contributes to our United Kingdom and to the whole world.

For that is the breadth of Scotland's influence.

From the creativity and ingenuity of Edinburgh's Festivals, three of which celebrated their 70th anniversary this year as some of the world's greatest arts events – to Dr Richard Henderson who has become the 14th Scot to be awarded the Nobel Prize.

From the UK's life-saving humanitarian efforts co-ordinated from East Kilbride to the factory in Falkirk making iconic double-decker buses that are sold to Mexico City.

From Scotland's defence industry, making world-leading warships on the Clyde, to Scottish food and drink enjoyed the world over.

And I am proud that as Prime Minister of our United Kingdom, the government I lead is committed to doing everything possible to support Scotland's continued success.

That includes investing over £1 billion in City Deals that have backed projects from five new technology innovation hubs and the new concert venue in Edinburgh, to the V&A opening in Dundee next year.

And it is that partnership between all the nations of the United Kingdom that makes us even stronger.

So today, let us take confidence from the contribution that Scotland will make in helping the United Kingdom to secure a bold, confident and prosperous future as a truly global nation.

And to all Scots, wherever you are in the world today, I wish you all a very happy St Andrew's Day.

Press release: UK and Welsh Governments meet to advance Brexit talks

First Secretary of State Damian Green meets Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns and First Minister Carwyn Jones, along with Local Authority leaders to move discussions on Brexit forward

The next round of Brexit talks between the Welsh and UK Governments will take place today (Thursday 30 November) in Cardiff, where First Secretary of State Damian Green and Welsh Secretary Alun Cairns will meet First Minister Carwyn Jones.

The meeting is the latest in a series of talks between both governments to help determine where powers repatriated from the EU to the UK at the point of Brexit will sit in future. It follows a positive and constructive meeting between the three ministers on 11 October.

Today's talks come after a meeting earlier in the day between Damian Green, Alun Cairns and Local Authority leaders in Wales, to discuss future growth deals, and the potential impact of Brexit on funding arrangements.

Secretary of State for Wales Alun Cairns said:

These talks are an opportunity for all parties to move towards an agreement on how powers should be shared as they return from Europe.

It is vital that we make Brexit a success for everyone, and it's in everyone's interests to reach an agreement on where decisions made at an EU level will be made once we leave the EU.

Putting the people of Wales at the heart of decision making is a priority for both governments, and it will not be a case of imposing decisions.

We must not create any new barriers to living and doing business in the UK, which is why we've already agreed the need for common frameworks in some areas.

I look forward to continued positive discussions with the Welsh Government as we negotiate our route out of the EU.

ENDS