



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE  
4 DECEMBER 2015**

## **HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO 'TCM RECIPE LICOZEN OINTMENT' SOLD LOCALLY FOR ECZEMA AND FOUND TO CONTAIN VERY HIGH LEVELS OF ARSENIC**

1 The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or use a health product labelled 'TCM Recipe Licozen Ointment', which has been tested and found to contain very high levels of arsenic. Arsenic is a toxic heavy metal and long-term exposure to it can cause serious adverse effects. Please see [Annex A](#) for pictures of the product.

2 A doctor had alerted HSA to the product after a mother reported dramatic improvement in her young child's chronic eczema shortly after applying 'TCM Recipe Licozen Ointment' that she bought from a retail store in the central part of Singapore. The product was advertised on various online platforms supported by numerous testimonials, claiming to be a 'superior alternative to cure skin disorders' when other medical treatments fail. It also claimed to be '100% safe and natural' and 'tested to be steroids-free' on its website. The mother of the patient was advised to stop using the product immediately when HSA's laboratory tests revealed the product to contain very high levels of arsenic.

### **Danger of applying skin products with high arsenic levels**

3 Arsenic is a toxic heavy metal. It can cause skin irritations, contact dermatitis (with symptoms such as skin rashes and blisters) or rashes resulting in skin peeling when applied externally. Widespread, prolonged application and accidental ingestion of products containing high levels of arsenic may increase the chance of arsenic poisoning. Possible symptoms of arsenic poisoning include vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, heart-related problems, breathing difficulties and numbness of the limbs. The risk of experiencing these harmful effects may be higher when used by young children or on broken inflamed skin.

### **Consumer advisory**

- 4 Members of the public who have purchased or are using this product are advised to:
- Stop using the product immediately and discard it. If you are experiencing any adverse effects or are concerned about your or your family members' health after using the affected product, please see a doctor as soon as possible.
  - Be wary of any health products promising miraculous results or make exaggerated claims such as "no side effects" and "100% safe" or produce unexpectedly quick recovery from chronic medical conditions. Such products may also contain undeclared ingredients that are harmful to your health.
  - Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you need help for the management of your acute and chronic medical symptoms and conditions.

Additionally, members of the public are encouraged to visit [www.healthdangers.sg](http://www.healthdangers.sg) to learn more about the dangers of buying health products from dubious sources. Such products may be harmful to your health as you cannot be certain where and how they were made, and what undeclared ingredients they may contain.

5 Sellers should stop the sales and distribution of 'TCM Recipe Licozen Ointment' immediately. Offenders may face a penalty fine of up to \$5,000 and/or imprisonment for a period of up to two years under the Medicines Act if convicted. HSA would like to remind sellers to be cautious when sourcing for health products to sell. It is the seller's responsibility to ensure that the products they sell are safe and adhere to local legislations before they are made available in the market.

6 Members of the public who come across or have any information on the sale and supply of 'TCM Recipe Licozen Ointment' or other illegal products may contact HSA's Enforcement Branch at Tel: 6866-3485 during office hours (Monday to Friday) or email: [hsa\\_is@hsa.gov.sg](mailto:hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg).

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#### **About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services and Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. As the national blood service, it is responsible for providing a safe and adequate blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

For more updates on public health and safety matters, follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/HSAsg](http://www.twitter.com/HSAsg).

#### **About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group**

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards. It contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework.

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