



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
7 MAY 2015**

HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO ‘beFIT TOTAL GARCINIA CAMBOGIA’ SOLD ONLINE AND FOUND TO CONTAIN VERY HIGH QUANTITIES OF BANNED SUBSTANCE SIBUTRAMINE

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’, an illegal weight loss product sold online. The product was tested by HSA to contain sibutramine and phenolphthalein, which are potent, undeclared western medicinal ingredients. Sibutramine, a prescription-only weight loss drug, has been banned in Singapore since 2010 due to serious safety concerns. Furthermore, the very high level of sibutramine detected in ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ could increase the toxicity of this product and lead to serious cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and fits.

2 ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ was touted to help in weight loss and labelled to contain garcinia cambogia fruit extract as the main ingredient to ‘support appetite control’ and ‘inhibit fat production’. HSA’s investigations revealed that the product is sold on local websites and social media platforms. The seller is currently assisting HSA with the investigation. Please refer to **Annex A** for the picture of the product.

Undeclared potent western medicinal ingredients found in ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’

3 While HSA has not received adverse event reports associated with ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ locally, hospitalisation following the use of other slimming products adulterated with sibutramine or its chemically related compounds have been reported both locally and overseas. Sibutramine was a prescription medicine previously used as an appetite suppressant in the management of obesity and has been banned for sale in Singapore since October 2010 because of safety concerns associated with cardiovascular risks. It may cause serious adverse effects, including high blood pressure, increased heart rate, anxiety, heart attacks and irregular heartbeats. Changes in mood such as anxiety, depression and mood swings have also been reported. The high amount of sibutramine detected in ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ could increase the toxicity of the product, leading to serious cardiovascular events described above and seizures (fits).

4 Phenolphthalein has been used medicinally as a laxative but is no longer in use in Singapore. Phenolphthalein may cause rashes, abdominal cramps, breathing difficulties, kidney disorders and has been found in animal studies to be associated with cancer.

5 Illegal health products such as ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ are generally produced under poor manufacturing conditions with no quality control. It cannot be ascertained where and how these products were made. As with ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’, the hidden undeclared ingredients can be present in high quantities, which can pose serious health hazards and even lead to death.

Consumer advisory

6 Members of the public who are consuming the product are advised to:

- (i) Stop taking ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ immediately and consult a doctor if you feel unwell or are concerned about your health.
- (ii) Not consume health products that promise quick and miraculous weight loss. Such products may contain undeclared potent ingredients that may seriously harm your health. Many slimming drugs are prescription medicines which should only be taken under medical supervision. Do not gamble with your health.
- (iii) Exercise caution when purchasing health products. The dangers of online purchasing include the lack of information on the sellers’ location, the source of their products and the conditions under which the products were manufactured and stored. Products sold online could also potentially be counterfeits or adulterated with undeclared potent ingredients. If buying online, only buy them from websites with an established retail presence in Singapore.

Sale and supply of illegal products

7 The sale and supply of complementary health products (e.g. health supplements, traditional medicines) containing potent western medicinal ingredients is illegal. HSA will take strong enforcement actions against those who engage in the sale and supply of these illegal health products. Anyone convicted of selling these illegal products may face a penalty fine of up to \$10,000 and/or imprisonment for a period of up to two years under the Poisons Act and a penalty fine of up to \$5,000 and/or imprisonment for a period of up to two years under the Medicines Act.

8 Members of the public who have any information on the sale and supply of ‘beFIT Total Garcinia Cambogia’ 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. Additionally, members of the public are encouraged to visit www.healthdangers.sg to learn more about the dangers of buying illegal health products from dubious sources.

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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](https://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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