



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

**HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO BLACK PILLS SOLD LOCALLY AND
FOUND TO CONTAIN UNDECLARED WESTERN MEDICINES
WHICH LED TO A PATIENT BEING HOSPITALISED**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or consume the black pills from 'Pusat Rawatan Darul Ilaaj' (Darul Ilaaj Treatment Centre). The affected black pills had caused one patient to be hospitalised. The pills, sold for general well-being and relieving of body aches, were tested by HSA to contain undeclared potent western medicinal ingredients, namely, dexamethasone (a steroid) and chlorpheniramine. Investigations showed that there are consumers in Singapore who have bought this product from 'Pusat Rawatan Darul Ilaaj'. As directed by HSA, 'Pusat Rawatan Darul Ilaaj' has since stopped selling the affected black pills. Prolonged use of these black pills, which are labelled to be of herbal origin, can lead to serious adverse reactions. Please see **Annex A** for the picture of the product.

2 A diabetic patient in his 50s was hospitalised for uncontrolled hypertension and Cushing's syndrome after consuming these black pills bought from 'Pusat Rawatan Darul Ilaaj'. As stopping the pills caused general discomfort, joint swelling and aches, the patient continued taking the black pills for a prolonged period of time. His hypertension and diabetes worsened due to the long-term consumption of the steroid-containing black pills. He was subsequently referred to a specialist and has since stopped taking the product, which led to an improvement of his medical conditions.

3 Dexamethasone is a potent steroid usually prescribed for inflammatory conditions and should only be used under strict medical supervision. Long-term unsupervised use of oral steroids can cause Cushing's syndrome (which is characterised by a round face or 'moon face' and upper body obesity with thin limbs), increased blood glucose levels leading to diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders, and an increased risk of infections. Patients with chronic medical conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes may experience worsening of their existing conditions. Chlorpheniramine, an antihistamine used to relieve allergic reactions such as rhinitis, can only be used under medical supervision by a pharmacist or doctor. Adverse effects from the use of chlorpheniramine include drowsiness, blurred vision, vomiting, constipation and poor coordination.

Consumer advisory

4 Members of the public who are consuming these black pills sold to them by 'Pusat Rawatan Darul Ilaaj' for general well-being and relieving of body aches are advised to:

- Consult a doctor as soon as possible. Do not stop taking the black pills immediately as sudden discontinuation of steroids without proper medical supervision can cause serious withdrawal symptoms such as weakness, fatigue, confusion and low blood pressure, especially when they have been consumed for more than a few weeks.
- Be wary of health products promising miraculous results with exaggerated claims. You cannot be certain where and how these products were made. Such products may 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 to learn more about the dangers of buying illegal 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 the said black pills immediately. Offenders 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 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 have any information on the sale and supply of these black pills 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.

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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.

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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