



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
18 NOVEMBER 2016**

HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO ‘VIP BIO MANGOSTEEN COMPLEX’ SOLD ONLINE AND FOUND TO CONTAIN VERY HIGH LEVELS OF BANNED SUBSTANCE SIBUTRAMINE

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or consume ‘VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex’, a weight loss product sold online. The product was tested by HSA and found to contain very high levels of a prohibited western medicine, sibutramine, and another potent undeclared western medicine, phenolphthalein.

2 ‘VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex’ is labelled to contain only natural ingredients, including fruit and herbal extracts. The product claims to deliver “immediate changes after around 7 days and significant results in 21 days”. HSA’s investigations revealed that the product is sold on several websites and popular social media platforms carrying testimonials of its weight loss effects. Please refer to **Annex A** for pictures of the product.

Dangerous effects of undeclared western medicines found in ‘VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex’

3 Sibutramine is a weight loss medicine that has been disallowed for sale in Singapore since 2010 due to serious safety concerns associated with cardiovascular risks. The high levels of sibutramine detected in ‘VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex’ could make it very toxic and cause serious adverse effects such as heart attacks and seizures (fits). In the past, several consumers had reported having hallucinations or hearing voices after consuming other health products adulterated with high levels of sibutramine. Other possible adverse effects include high blood pressure, increased heart rate, irregular heartbeat, anxiety, depression and mood swings.

4 While HSA has not received any adverse event reports associated with ‘VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex’ locally, the use of other slimming products adulterated with high levels of sibutramine have led to consumers being hospitalised both locally and overseas. Before it was banned, sibutramine was a prescription medicine used as an appetite suppressant to manage obesity.

5 Phenolphthalein was used as a laxative in the past, but has not been registered in Singapore since 2011¹. Phenolphthalein may cause rashes, abdominal cramps, breathing difficulties, kidney disorders and has been found in animal studies to be associated with cancer.

¹ Phenolphthalein is an obsolete pharmaceutical compound that has been superseded by newer laxatives.

Consumer advisory

6 Members of the public are advised to:

- I. Stop taking 'VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex' immediately, and consult a doctor if you feel unwell or are concerned about your health.
- II. Be wary of health products that promise quick and miraculous weight loss or carry exaggerated claims like "guaranteed results" or "scientifically proven". Such products may contain prescription medicines which should only be taken under medical supervision, or undeclared potent ingredients that may seriously harm your health. Do not gamble with your health.
- III. Do not trust online product reviews, as these testimonials usually cannot be verified.
- IV. Exercise caution when purchasing health products online. Anyone can be a seller on these e-commerce platforms. Products sold online could also potentially be counterfeits or adulterated with undeclared potent ingredients.

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.

Sale and supply of illegal products

7 Sellers should stop selling 'VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex' immediately. They are reminded that it is illegal to sell and supply complementary health products (e.g. health supplements, traditional medicines) containing undeclared potent western medicines or banned substances.

8 Anyone convicted of selling illegal health products may be liable for prosecution under the Health Products Act, Poisons Act and/or Medicines Act. Offenders will face a penalty fine of up to \$100,000 and/or imprisonment for a period of up to three years under the Health Products Act; 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.

9 Members of the public who have any information on the sale and supply of 'VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex' 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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VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex – Inner packaging



VIP Bio Mangosteen Complex – Outer packaging

