



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
10 DECEMBER 2014**

HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO TWO ILLEGAL WEIGHT LOSS PRODUCTS PURCHASED ONLINE WHICH LED TO TWO PATIENTS BEING HOSPITALISED

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or consume two illegal weight loss products found online which led two young persons to be hospitalised with hallucinations and acute kidney failure after consuming them.

2 One of the products, 'Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet', was tested by HSA to contain potent, undeclared chemical ingredients, such as sibutramine, benzyl sibutramine (a chemically-related compound of sibutramine) and phenolphthalein. Sibutramine, a weight loss drug, has been banned in Singapore since 2010 due to serious safety concerns. The level of sibutramine detected was found at high quantities that could increase the toxicity of this product. The second product 'Nutrex Research Adipodex', marketed online as a dietary supplement, was labelled to contain yohimbine which is a potent western medicinal ingredient not allowed to be present in supplements sold locally. Please refer to **Annex A** for pictures of the products.

3 The two cases of serious adverse events associated with these illegal weight loss products were reported to HSA by astute healthcare professionals recently. A teenager experienced hallucinations after consuming 'Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet' for more than a month to lose weight. She was hospitalised as a result. Another consumer in his 20s consumed 'Nutrex Research Adipodex' advertised for weight loss and suffered acute kidney failure leading to hospitalisation.

4 Both products were purchased online and were touted to help in weight loss. 'Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet' was labelled to contain all natural ingredients such as grapefruit, raspberry ketone, hawthorn berry, green tea and pomegranate but was detected to contain banned ingredients. The product claimed to work in '7 miracle ways' to increase metabolism, and burn fats. 'Nutrex Research Adipodex' claimed to be a 'powerful stimulant weight loss sensation'. Investigations by HSA are currently on-going.

Undeclared potent chemicals found in the illegal products

5 Sibutramine has been banned for sale in Singapore since October 2010 because of safety concerns about cardiovascular risks. Sibutramine was a prescription medicine previously used in the treatment of obesity whereas benzyl sibutramine is an analogue (a chemically-related compound) of sibutramine. The use of sibutramine and benzyl sibutramine 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 associated with these compounds have also been reported. Of concern is the high amounts of sibutramine detected that could increase the toxicity of the product. The presence of phenolphthalein may also cause rashes, abdominal cramps, bone pain or even difficulty in breathing and kidney disorders.

6 Yohimbine is a potent western medicinal ingredient for use only under strict medical supervision. Adverse effects associated with yohimbine include insomnia, anxiety,

palpitations (sensation of heart pounding, racing or skipped beats), chest pain, sweating, blurred vision and high blood pressure.

Consumer advisory

7 Members of the public who are consuming these products are advised to:

- (i) Stop using 'Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet' & 'Nutrex Research Adipodex' immediately and consult a doctor if they feel unwell. Undeclared potent ingredients may cause possible adverse reactions and drug interactions with other medications, which can harm consumers' health and well-being. Consumers with medical conditions are advised not to self-medicate and seek the proper medical treatment for their conditions.
- (ii) Be wary of complementary health products (e.g. health supplements, traditional medications) which make exaggerated claims or promise to provide rapid weight loss.
- (iii) Exercise caution when purchasing their health products, and obtain them from reliable and reputable sources locally. 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 counterfeit or adulterated with undeclared potent ingredients.

8 HSA will take strong enforcement actions against those who engage in the sale and supply of illegal health products containing potent medicinal ingredients. 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.

9 Members of the public who have any information on the sale and supply of these two illegal products 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.

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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Picture 1: Two illegal products 'Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet' and 'Nutrex Research Adipodex'



Picture 2: 'Nutri Drops Grapefruit Diet'



Picture 3: 'Nutrex Research Adipodex'

