



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
5 MAY 2016**

HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO ‘HAI LENG HAI BEH HERBAL ITCH REMOVING CAPSULE’ (‘海龙海马止痒丸’) PURCHASED OVERSEAS WHICH LED TO SERIOUS ADVERSE REACTION IN PATIENT

1 The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or consume a health product labelled ‘Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule’ (‘海龙海马止痒丸’), which caused rapid weight gain and round ‘moon face’ in a consumer. Laboratory tests revealed the presence of undeclared potent medicinal ingredients dexamethasone, chlorpheniramine and paracetamol, although it was labelled “100% herbal”. Please see [**Annex A**](#) for pictures of the product.

2 A female consumer in her 40s had taken the capsules to relieve an itchy skin condition. Although her itchy skin condition improved within a day of taking the capsules, she experienced rapid weight gain and her face became puffy after consuming the product for over two months. She was diagnosed with Cushing’s syndrome (which is characterised by round face or ‘moon face’ and upper body obesity with thin limbs) and her doctor reported the case to HSA. The patient purchased the product from a retail store overseas after it was recommended to her by a relative.

Undeclared potent western medicinal ingredients found

3 Dexamethasone is a potent steroid that is 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, increased blood glucose levels leading to diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders, and an increased risk of infections. Please refer to [**Annex B**](#) for more information on the potential adverse effects of the other undeclared medicinal ingredients found in this product.

Consumer advisory

4 Members of the public who have purchased or are consuming this product are advised to:

- Consult a doctor as soon as possible. Do not stop the use of ‘Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule’ 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 it has been consumed for more than a few weeks.

- Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you need help for the management of your acute and chronic medical symptoms and conditions (e.g. eczema).
- Be wary of any health products that produce unexpected quick recovery of medical conditions, especially when purchasing them from sources which you may not be familiar with, even if well-meaning friends or relatives have recommended them. You cannot be certain where and how these products were made. They may be illegal, counterfeit or substandard, and may contain undeclared ingredients which can harm your health.

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.

5 Although the consumer bought 'Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule' overseas, it does not rule out the possibility of the product being sold in Singapore. Hence, any sellers should stop the sale and distribution of 'Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule' 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 applicable 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 'Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule' 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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SINGAPORE
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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.

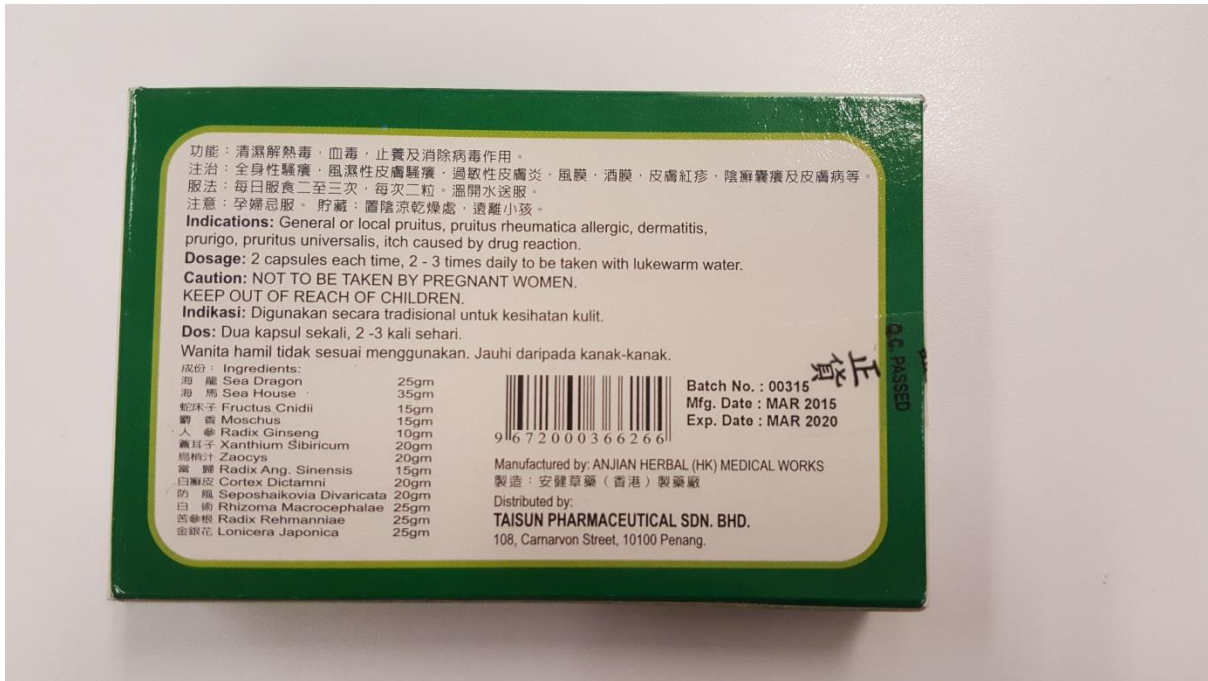
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‘Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule’



‘Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule’ - Outer packaging





'Hai Leng Hai Beh Herbal Itch Removing Capsule'- Inner packaging



Possible adverse effects of the undeclared potent western medicinal ingredients

Undeclared Ingredients	Possible Adverse Reactions
Chlorpheniramine	Drowsiness, constipation, diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting
Dexamethasone	Diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, increased risk of infections, Cushing's syndrome, osteoporosis, depression, confusion
Paracetamol	Hypersensitivity reactions such as rash and swelling of lips or face