



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE**

**24 AUGUST 2011**

## **HSA WARNS AGAINST TAKING THREE HEALTH PRODUCTS FOUND TO CONTAIN POTENT WESTERN MEDICINAL INGREDIENTS**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) alerts members of the public against taking three health products sold under the disguise of traditional herbal medicines, which have been tested to contain potent western medicinal ingredients. These illegal adulterated health products are labelled as:

- I. TIAN MA TU CHUNG SEVEN LEAVE GINSENG**  
[天麻杜仲七叶参]
- II. VALL-BOON TONGKAT ALI**  
[冬革阿里]
- III. PAO NI KANG**  
[保胰康]

2 The three adulterated health products were purchased by consumers from overseas or obtained through friends and relatives. The serious adverse effects experienced by the consumers were detected by astute doctors, who promptly reported the cases to HSA's Vigilance Branch for investigation. These products were tested at HSA's Pharmaceutical Laboratory, which revealed the presence of potent western medicinal ingredients. HSA has alerted the drug regulatory authorities of the countries in which these products were purchased.

3 Members of the public, who have the above-mentioned products in their possession, should stop taking them as these products can cause life-threatening adverse effects.

## About the Products and Adverse Reactions

### i) TIAN MA TU CHUNG SEVEN LEAVE GINSENG [天麻杜仲七叶参]

4 Tian Ma Tu Chung Seven Leave Ginseng [天麻杜仲七叶参] was tested to contain two adulterants – dexamethasone and chlorpheniramine. It is packaged in a bottle of 48 black round pills. The product label claims to treat pain and numbness. Refer to the Annex for a photograph of the product and details of the adulterants.

5 Two elderly patients in their 60s were reported to have taken the product to relieve physical pain and discomfort. One of them suffered from Cushing's syndrome due to the prolonged intake of dexamethasone (a corticosteroid found in the product) after taking it for about one month. The symptoms include puffy face, hump back and high blood pressure. In addition, she experienced hallucination and memory loss. The patient has sought medical treatment and is recovering from the adverse effects. According to the patient's family, her other relatives were also consuming this product but have since stopped.

### ii) VALL-BOON TONGKAT ALI [冬革阿里]

6 Vall-Boon Tongkat Ali [冬革阿里] is presented in a bottle of 35 brown capsules and claims to relieve fatigue and tiredness. It was tested to contain four adulterants of western medicines - dexamethasone, chlorpheniramine, ketoconazole and pheniramine. Refer to the Annex for a photograph of the product and details of the adulterants.

7 A male patient in his 20s was reported to have taken Vall-Boon Tongkat Ali as an energy booster. His doctor noted signs and symptoms of Cushing's syndrome, such as thinning of the skin and appearance of red stretch marks (striae) all over his body. The patient also experienced dependency on the product when he tried to stop consuming it and developed persistent headaches and insomnia. He is currently under medical treatment for the adverse effects.

### iii) PAO NI KANG [保胰康]

8 Pao Ni Kang [保胰康] is packaged in a bottle containing 80 yellow capsules. The product claims to invigorate vital energy and was tested to contain repaglinide. Repaglinide is a potent anti-diabetic western medicine, which should be taken under medical supervision. Refer to the Annex for a photograph of the product and details of the adulterants.

9 A male patient in his 30s developed symptoms of low blood glucose after he self-medicated with Pao Ni Kang for his diabetes. He was hospitalised when he suffered from confusion, giddiness and slurred speech. Life-threatening conditions such as brain damage and coma could result from dangerously low blood glucose levels. The patient has since recovered from the serious adverse effects.

## Public Advisory

10 Members of the public who have purchased these products are advised not to consume them and those who have taken them should stop consuming these products and seek medical attention, especially if they experience any of the adverse effects.

11 Ms Chan Cheng Leng<sup>1</sup>, Assistant Group Director of the Health Products Regulation Group in HSA says, “The harmful effects of adulterated health products are evident from the many reports of adverse reactions that HSA received. Although these products provide temporary relief from medical conditions such as aches and pains, they can also cause serious and life-threatening adverse effects which may be permanent and irreversible. The health risks of taking these products are not worth it”.

12 Consumers are reminded to be wary of traditional or herbal medicines that provide quick and miraculous relief for chronic medical conditions, especially if these products are bought from unreliable or unknown sources, including that from the Internet.

13 Medical practitioners are encouraged to report any serious adverse events experienced by their patients to HSA’s Vigilance Branch for investigation, if they suspect that the patients have been consuming any adulterated health products.

14 HSA strongly encourages the public to report sales of any suspicious and illegal health products to the Enforcement Branch of HSA at Tel: 6866 3485 or Email: [hsa\\_is@hsa.gov.sg](mailto:hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg).

<sup>1</sup>*Ms Chan Cheng Leng's name & title in Chinese :*

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医疗保健产品管理司  
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曾清灵

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### ▪ **About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is a multidisciplinary agency that applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services, Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. It operates the national blood bank, Bloodbank@HSA, securing the nation’s blood supply. It also

applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit [www.hsa.gov.sg](http://www.hsa.gov.sg).

▪ **About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group**

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework. It ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards.

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**TIAN MA TU CHUNG SEVEN LEAVE GINSENG [天麻杜仲七叶参], VALL-BOON TONGKAT ALI [冬革阿里] & PAO NI KANG [保胰康] (left to right)**

**1. Product Label of TIAN MA TU CHUNG SEVEN LEAVE GINSENG**

**Chinese**

产品名称:	天麻杜仲七叶参
功能与主治:	风湿骨痛, 腰酸背痛, 筋骨无力, 关节肿痛
服法与用量:	每日三次, 每次三颗, 用开水送服。
包装	48 粒装
分销商	Ving Hong Enterprise, Perak, Malaysia

## English

Name:	<b>TIAN MA TU CHUNG SEVEN LEAVE GINSENG</b>
Indications:	Used for lumbar and leg pains, rheumatoid arthritis, muscular and osseous atony and limb numbness. Helps to relax muscles, invigorate blood circulation, expel flatulence and relieve pains.
Dosage:	Three pills each time, three times a day. Consume with warm water.
Packing:	48 pills
Distributor:	Ving Hong Enterprise, Perak, Malaysia

## 2. Product Label of VALL-BOON TONGKAT ALI

### Chinese

产品名称:	冬革阿里
功能与主治:	壮气强身, 消除疲劳, 防老抗衰。
服法与用量:	成人每日三次, 每次两粒。
包装	35 粒, 胶囊
分销商与制造商:	伟安制药厂有限公司, Penang, Malaysia

### English

Name:	<b>VALL-BOON TONGKAT ALI</b>
Indications:	Sustain good health, relieve fatigue or tiredness, and slow aging.
Dosage:	Adults – 2 capsules, 3 times a day
Packing:	35 pieces, capsules
Manufacturer & Distributor:	Vall-Boon Medical Factory Sdn Bhd, Penang, Malaysia

### 3. Product Label of PAO NI KANG

#### Chinese

产品名称:	保胰康
功能与主治:	滋阴清热、益气活血、补脾益肾。
服法与用量:	每次一粒，每日三次。每天不可超过五粒。
分销商:	海鸣（马）有限公司, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
制药商:	西德蓝藻制药有限公司, Selangor, Malaysia
包装:	80 粒 x 400mg, 胶囊

#### English

Name:	<b>PAO NI KANG</b>
Indications as on label:	Traditionally used to invigorate vital energy, and for sweating.
Dosage:	1 capsule each time. 3 times daily. Do not exceed 5 capsules per day.
Distributor:	High Mean (M) Sdn Bhd, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Manufacturer:	Shitek Micro Algae Sdn Bhd, Selangor, Malaysia
Packing:	80 pieces x 400mg, capsules

#### Description of the Potent and Undeclared Western medicinal Ingredients

- a) Dexamethasone is a corticosteroid used for anti-inflammatory purposes (i.e. reduce pain and swelling). Unsupervised long-term use of dexamethasone can cause Cushing's syndrome, increased blood glucose levels leading to diabetes, high blood pressure, muscular and bone damage.
- b) Chlorpheniramine is a type of antihistamine used to treat allergic reactions. Adverse effects from unsupervised use of chlorpheniramine include drowsiness, confusion and urinary retention.
- c) Ketoconazole is commonly used to treat fungal infections. Ketoconazole can also cause liver damage with accompanied clinical symptoms such as

stomach pain, skin rashes, and depression if used without proper medical supervision.

- d) Pheniramine is used to treat allergic conditions. Pheniramine may also trigger adverse effects such as dry mouth, upset stomach and induce drowsiness, chest congestion and headaches.
- e) Repaglinide is an oral medication for lowering blood glucose in individuals with diabetes. Dangerous hypoglycemic (very low blood glucose) reactions can occur without proper medical supervision. Symptoms include nausea, tiredness, heart palpitations, muscle weakness, blurred vision, confusion, or even loss of consciousness.