

HSA updates on products found overseas that contain potent ingredients (August 2025)

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) would like to update the public on products that have been found and reported by overseas regulators in August 2025 to contain potent ingredients which are not allowed in these products and may cause side effects. This information is provided to increase awareness on safety issues of such products found overseas, which may impact the local population. Please refer to Annex A and Annex B for the list of products and the possible side effects of the potent ingredients.

HSA's Advisory

- 2 Members of the public are advised to:
 - Consult a doctor if you have consumed any of the products and are feeling unwell.
 - Avoid buying any of the products when abroad.
 - Exercise caution when purchasing health products online or from sources (either local or overseas) 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 potent ingredients which can harm your health. If buying health products online, we encourage you to buy them from websites with an established retail presence in Singapore.
 - Be wary of products that promise quick and miraculous results or carry exaggerated claims like “100% safe”, “no side effects” or “scientifically proven”. Consumers should also be cautious of products that produce unexpected quick recovery of medical conditions.
 - Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you need help for the management of your acute and chronic medical symptoms and conditions (e.g. diabetes, hypertension, eczema).
- 3 Additionally, members of the public are encouraged to visit <https://www.hsa.gov.sg/consumer-safety/> to learn more about the dangers of buying health products from dubious sources.
- 4 Members of the public who come across the sale and supply of these products in Singapore may contact HSA's Enforcement Branch at Tel: 6866 3485 during office hours (Monday to Friday) or email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg.

Annex A

List of Products

Note: There may be different versions or variants of the products listed below. You are advised to consult your doctor or pharmacist if you are unsure of any health product you intend to use, or if you need help for your acute and chronic medical symptoms and conditions

Name of product	Picture of product	Potent ingredient(s)	Source (Regulatory Agency)
Chang-Sze-Long Badu Gao	 	Mercury	Ministry of Health Malaysia
Chermook Bright Face Cream Melasma Perfect White Cream		Mercury and Betamethasone	Thailand Food and Drug Administration

Name of product	Picture of product	Potent ingredient(s)	Source (Regulatory Agency)
Green Lumber Natural Fuel For Men		Tadalafil	United States Food and Drug Administration
JC BEAUTY CULTURE RADIANCE RENEWAL SERUM		Hydroquinone and Tretinoin	Ministry of Health Malaysia

Name of product	Picture of product	Potent ingredient(s)	Source (Regulatory Agency)
KMA MULTI FACE STICK (Aurora Pink)		Mercury	Thailand Food and Drug Administration
Pain Flex		Dexamethasone and Methocarbamol	United States Food and Drug Administration

Name of product	Picture of product	Potent ingredient(s)	Source (Regulatory Agency)
Slimming King	 	Semaglutide	SwissMedic
THE PERFECT DERMA CREAM	  	Miconazole	Ministry of Health Malaysia

Annex B

The possible side effects of the potent ingredients

Dexamethasone

Dexamethasone is a potent steroid that is usually prescribed for inflammatory conditions and should only be used under strict medical supervision. Long term use of an oral steroid without medical supervision can cause high blood pressure, cataracts, an increased risk of infections, and Cushing's syndrome (characterised by the appearance of round face or 'moon face' and upper body obesity with thin limbs). Discontinuation of steroids without proper medical supervision can cause serious withdrawal symptoms such as fatigue, confusion and low blood pressure.

Hydroquinone

Hydroquinone is a potent ingredient used in prescription medicines for the treatment of skin conditions. The ingredient is prohibited in skincare cosmetic products and should only be used under medical supervision, as hydroquinone may cause harmful effects if not used properly. The inappropriate use of hydroquinone could result in changes in skin colour and hypersensitivity reactions such as rashes, redness, tingling and burning of skin.

Mercury

Mercury is a toxic substance and is prohibited for use as an ingredient in cosmetic products. Regular application of creams containing mercury could lead to rash, skin discolouration and blotching. Chronic exposure to very high levels of mercury in cosmetic products may also cause toxic effects to the kidneys, digestive and nervous system, as it can be absorbed through the skin. This could lead to organ damage.

Methocarbamol

Methocarbamol is a medicine used to treat acute, painful musculoskeletal spasms. Common side effects include headaches, sleepiness and dizziness. Serious side effects may include anaphylaxis, liver problems, confusion and seizures.

Miconazole

Miconazole is a medicine used to treat fungal infections. Side effects from inappropriate use of creams containing miconazole include burning, stinging, swelling, irritation, redness and flaking of the skin.

Phosphodiesterase Type 5 (PDE-5) inhibitors

This class of medicine includes avanafil, carbodenafil, sildenafil, tadalafil, vardenafil and their derivatives. These medicines can cause serious side effects such as strokes, heart attacks, decreased or loss of vision and hearing and priapism (painful and exceedingly long erections). If priapism is not treated immediately, it may lead to permanent impotence. PDE-5 inhibitors

are also not suitable for patients with medical conditions such as certain heart-related problems or who are on heart medications such as nitrates. Deaths of patients found to be using sildenafil while on nitrates have been reported overseas.

Semaglutide

Semaglutide is used to help control blood sugar levels in patients with type 2 diabetes and should be used under medical supervision. Undesirable side effects include nausea, diarrhoea and vomiting. More severe side effects such as pancreatitis have been observed from the use of semaglutide. Hypoglycaemia (i.e. low blood sugar) may occur when used with insulin or other glucose-lowering medications.

Tretinoin

Tretinoin is a potent ingredient used in prescription medicines for the treatment of skin conditions and should be used under medical supervision. The ingredient is prohibited in skincare cosmetic products. Inappropriate use of tretinoin could lead to side effects such as redness and peeling of skin.