



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
8 JUNE 2021**

HSA REMOVES OVER 700 LISTINGS OF ILLEGAL HEALTH PRODUCTS FROM LOCAL E-COMMERCE PLATFORMS DURING WEEK OF GLOBAL INTENSIFIED SURVEILLANCE

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) has removed more than 3,200 product listings from local e-commerce platforms from January to May 2021. About 700 of these listings were removed during Operation Pangea, an enforcement operation targeting the online sale of illicit pharmaceutical products coordinated by INTERPOL between 18 and 25 May 2021. During this week, HSA intensified online surveillance of local e-commerce platforms to detect and disrupt the online sale of illegal health products.

2 The majority of product listings taken down included prescription medicines for chronic medical conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes and for the management of cholesterol. These were often leftover or unused medicine prescribed for the individual. The sellers claimed that they were unaware that such products were prescription medicines that could only be prescribed by doctors. Many of them were first-time sellers.

3 HSA also removed listings of lifestyle health products such as weight loss pills, sexual enhancement medicines and cosmetic products for skin whitening, which were tested by HSA to be adulterated with medicinal ingredients or banned substances, or from safety alerts by overseas regulators. The sellers were issued warnings and reminded of the regulatory requirements that they have to comply with.

EFFECTIVE GROUND ENFORCEMENT CONTINUES TO DISRUPT ILLEGAL ONLINE SALES

4 While surveillance and enforcement actions were intensified online during the week, regular enforcement efforts continued on the ground. On 18 May 2021, HSA received information relating to two parcels from overseas, which were suspected to contain medicines and medical devices, and proceeded to inspect a local residential location. More prescription medicines, including antibiotics, abortion tablets and oral contraceptives, and condoms were uncovered in the residential unit. More than 10,000

units of prescription medicines and medical devices intended for local online sale were seized. Investigations are ongoing.

5 Please refer to **Annex A** for photographs of the seized health products and examples of product listings that were taken down by HSA.

CONSUMER ADVISORY

6 Members of the public are advised:

- Exercise caution when buying health products online. They may be cheaper and appear to offer better value, but the lower price could be due to unsafe or inferior ingredients, poor manufacturing methods and substandard or unhygienic storage conditions. They could also be adulterated with harmful or banned ingredients.
- Be wary of health products that promise quick and miraculous results or carry exaggerated claims like “100% safe”, “no side effects”, “quick effects” or “scientifically proven”. They can contain potent medicinal ingredients that can harm your health. Do not trust online product reviews, as these testimonials usually cannot be verified.
- When buying health products online, buy them from reputable retailers’ websites or those with an established retail presence in Singapore.
- Prescription medicines should be prescribed by a doctor based on the individual’s medical condition. As prescription medicines are potent products, they can cause serious side effects when used without appropriate medical supervision.

ADVISORY TO SELLERS AND SUPPLIERS

7 HSA would like to remind members of the public that they should not sell prescription medicines as these are potent products that can cause serious side effects when used without appropriate medical supervision. Only qualified persons with an appropriate licence are allowed to sell such products. The sale of prescription medicines by individuals who do not hold the appropriate licence is an offence under the Health Products Act. If convicted, the individual may be imprisoned for up to 2 years and/or fined up to \$50,000.

8 HSA takes a serious view against those engaged in the sale and supply of health products that are adulterated or carry misleading claims, and will take strong

enforcement action against such persons. Anyone who supplies such health products is liable to prosecution and if convicted, may be imprisoned for up to 3 years and/or fined up to \$100,000.

9 Members of the public who encounter illegal, counterfeit or other suspicious health products are encouraged to contact the Enforcement Branch of HSA at Tel: 68663485 or email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg.

OPERATION PANGEA

10 HSA has participated in this global week of action coordinated by INTERPOL for 14 consecutive years. 92 countries took part in this year's Operation Pangea.

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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.

Health products seized from residential unit

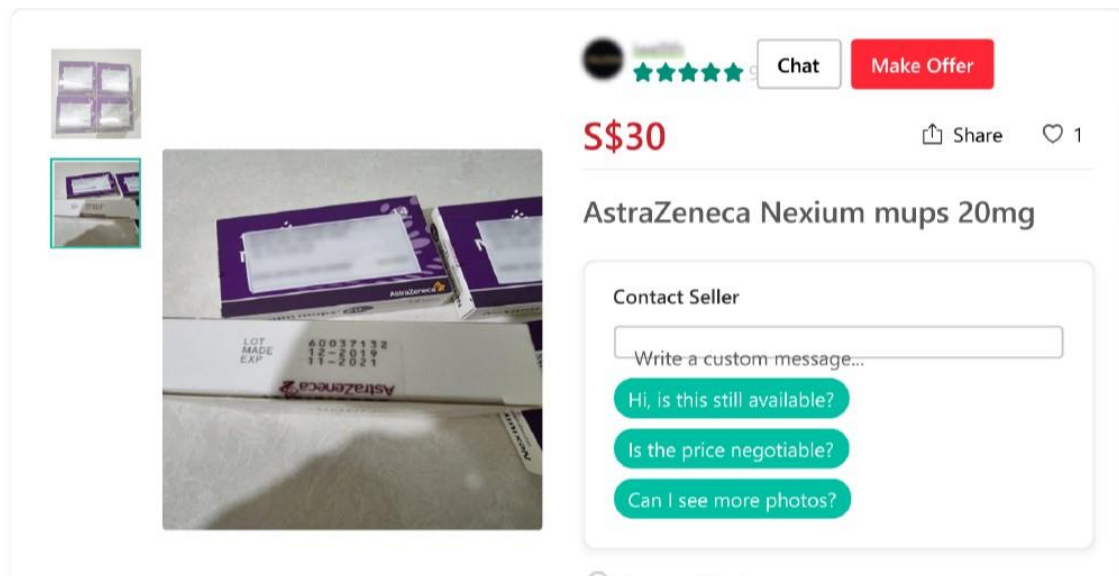


Health products stored in residential unit

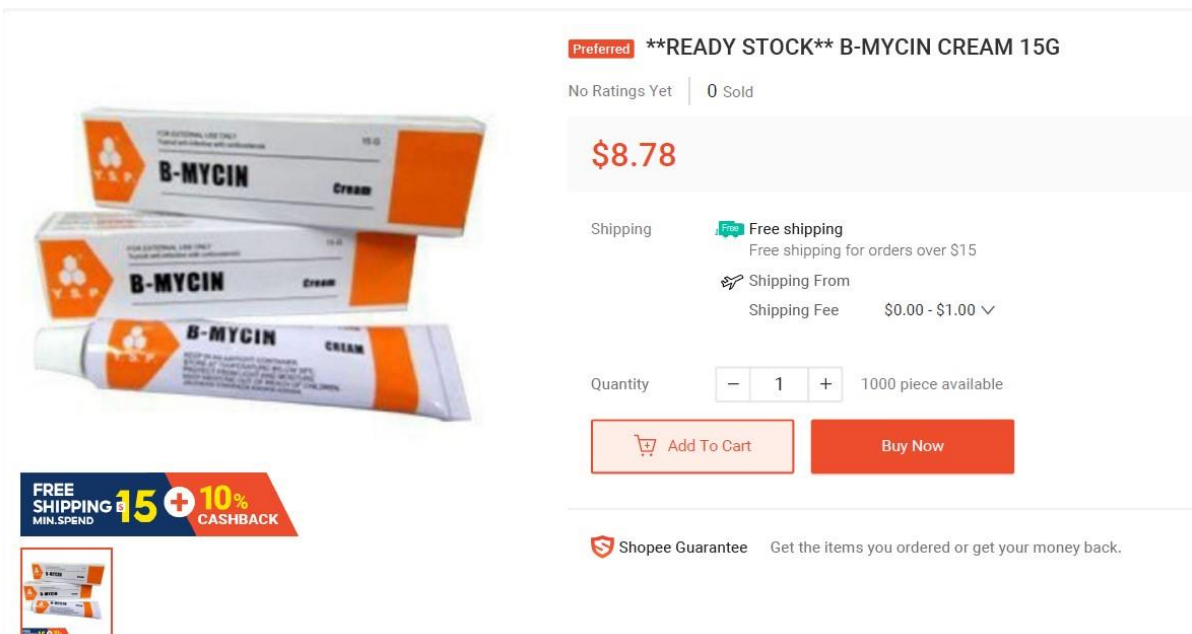




Examples of product listings taken down by HSA



This screenshot shows a product listing for AstraZeneca Nexium mups 20mg. The listing includes a profile picture of the seller, a 5-star rating, and buttons for 'Chat' and 'Make Offer'. The price is listed as \$30. There are 'Share' and '1' likes icons. The product name is 'AstraZeneca Nexium mups 20mg'. Below the name is a 'Contact Seller' section with a text input field and three pre-set messages: 'Hi, is this still available?', 'Is the price negotiable?', and 'Can I see more photos?'. A main image shows the product boxes with lot and expiration dates: LOT 40037132, MADE 12-2019, EXP 11-2021.



This screenshot shows a product listing for B-MYCIN CREAM 15G. The listing is marked as 'Preferred' and 'READY STOCK'. It has '0 Sold' and 'No Ratings Yet'. The price is \$8.78. Shipping is 'Free shipping' for orders over \$15. Shipping is from an unspecified location with a fee of \$0.00 - \$1.00. The quantity is 1, with 1000 pieces available. There are 'Add To Cart' and 'Buy Now' buttons. A promotional banner at the bottom left says 'FREE SHIPPING \$15+ 10% CASHBACK MIN. SPEND'. A 'Shopee Guarantee' badge is at the bottom right, stating 'Get the items you ordered or get your money back.' The product image shows three boxes and one tube of B-MYCIN CREAM.