



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE  
9 MARCH 2020

**HSA ALERT: 'SHEN QI DAN BAI NIAN CAO YAO' & 'RICALINU'  
FOUND TO CONTAIN POTENT MEDICINAL INGREDIENTS, 'FREAKY  
FITZ' DETECTED WITH BANNED SUBSTANCE**

***One product led to chest discomfort in an elderly woman***

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or use the three health products below. Consumption of these products may pose serious health risks as they were found to contain potent medicinal ingredients, which are prohibited in such products. The three products are:

Product name	Potent medicinal ingredients	Source of purchase
'SHEN QI DAN BAI NIAN CAO YAO' '神奇丹 百年草药'	Chlorpheniramine Dexamethasone Diclofenac Frusemide	Product obtained from a friend who purchased it in Malaysia
'Ricalinu'	Dexamethasone Meloxicam Tramadol	Product was purchased in Indonesia
'Freaky Fitz'	Sibutramine	Sold on local e-commerce platforms

Please refer to **Annex A** for photos of the products and **Annex B** for the possible adverse effects of the medicinal ingredients found in these products.

## **CONSUMER EXPERIENCED CHEST DISCOMFORT AFTER TAKING ‘SHEN QI DAN BAI NIAN CAO YAO’**

2 A woman in her 70s experienced chest discomfort after taking ‘SHEN QI DAN BAI NIAN CAO YAO’, which was labelled “for pain relief in adults and children”. The consumer obtained the product from her friend who sourced it from Malaysia.

3 The product claimed to contain only herbal ingredients like cordyceps and ginseng. However, HSA tested and detected multiple medicinal ingredients in this product: chlorpheniramine (an antihistamine), dexamethasone (a steroid), diclofenac (a painkiller), and frusemide (a medicine for removing excess water from the body). These potent ingredients can cause serious adverse effects when used without medical supervision.

## **FOILED ATTEMPT TO IMPORT ‘RICALINU’**

4 A man in his 40s attempted to bring in 20 boxes of ‘Ricalinu’ from Indonesia but was stopped at the Singapore Cruise Centre by checkpoint officers. The product was falsely labelled to contain only herbs for treating a range of pain ailments including rheumatism and gout. HSA’s tests found that the product contained three medicinal ingredients: dexamethasone, a potent steroid, meloxicam and tramadol, potent painkillers.

## **BANNED SUBSTANCE DETECTED IN ‘FREAKY FITZ’**

5 A member of the public provided feedback to HSA that ‘Freaky Fitz’ was sold online with exaggerated claims of being able to help consumers slim down within days. HSA tested ‘Freaky Fitz’ and found that it contained sibutramine. Sibutramine was previously a prescription medicine but has been banned in Singapore since 2010 due to an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes.

6 'Freaky Fitz' is promoted as a slimming drink containing natural ingredients, with claims including 'fast slimming results', 'burns fat fast without dieting and exercising' and 'safe to consume'. Its label also carry a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) logo (a quality certification mark) that is falsified. This may mislead consumers into believing that the product is safe and manufactured under high quality standards. The product is sold on local e-commerce platforms such as Shopee, Carousell, Lazada and Qoo10. HSA is working with the website administrators of these platforms to take down the affected listings.

## **ADVISORY TO CONSUMERS**

7 Consumers are advised to:

- See a doctor as soon as possible if you have taken 'SHEN QI DAN BAI NIAN CAO YAO' or 'Ricalinu' as they contain potent steroids. Discontinuation of steroids without proper medical supervision can cause serious withdrawal symptoms such as fatigue, confusion and low blood pressure.
- Stop taking 'Freaky Fitz' immediately and consult a doctor if you feel unwell or are concerned about your health.
- Be wary of health products that are advertised to deliver quick and miraculous results, or carry exaggerated claims such as 'burns fat fast without dieting and exercising' and 'safe to consume'. Consumers should be cautious even if the product appears well-packaged or have logos of international standards printed on them.
- Avoid purchasing health products from unfamiliar sources, and exercise caution when buying such products online or from well-meaning friends. You cannot be certain where and how these products were made. They can contain potent ingredients which can seriously harm your health.

## **ADVISORY TO SELLERS AND SUPPLIERS**

8 All sellers and suppliers must stop selling these products immediately. It is illegal to sell and supply such products, which contain potent medicinal ingredients or banned substances. Sellers and suppliers are liable to prosecution and if convicted, may be imprisoned for up to 3 years and/or fined up to \$100,000.

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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](http://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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**PICTURES OF THE THREE PRODUCTS**

'SHEN QI DAN BAI NIAN CAO YAO'

'神奇丹 百年草药'



# 'RICALINU'



'FREAKY FITZ'



## **POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF POTENT INGREDIENTS FOUND IN THE PRODUCTS**

### **Chlorpheniramine**

Chlorpheniramine is an antihistamine used to relieve allergic reactions such as hives, asthma and rhinitis. The possible adverse effects of chlorpheniramine include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation and drowsiness.

### **Dexamethasone**

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 steroids can cause increased blood glucose levels (which may lead to diabetes), high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders, an increased risk of infections and Cushing's syndrome (a round face or 'moon face' appearance 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.

### **Diclofenac and meloxicam**

Diclofenac and meloxicam are potent painkillers that may potentially cause serious gastric bleeding, as well as cardiovascular events such as heart attacks and stroke when used for a prolonged period. They should be used under close medical supervision, especially in patients with underlying heart conditions.

### **Frusemide**

Frusemide is a diuretic used to eliminate water and salt from the body. When taken in excess, the 'water-eliminating' effect of frusemide can cause the depletion of sodium, chloride, body water and other minerals in the body.

**Tramadol**

Tramadol is a potent painkiller that can be addictive when used inappropriately without medical supervision, leading to possible overdose and death. Overdose of tramadol can increase the risk of serious adverse effects such as respiratory depression leading to apnoea (cessation of breathing), coma, bradycardia (abnormally slow heart rate) and seizures.

**Sibutramine**

Sibutramine was a prescription-only-medicine for weight loss but has been banned in Singapore since 2010 because of an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes. Other serious adverse effects including fast heart rate, hallucinations or hearing voices have also been reported by consumers who took slimming products adulterated with sibutramine. A recent case involved a consumer who experienced very fast heart rate and lost consciousness. She required resuscitation and now suffers from severe heart failure.