



HSA ALERT: FIVE PRODUCTS DETECTED TO CONTAIN POTENT MEDICINAL INGREDIENTS INCLUDING STEROIDS; TWO CONSUMERS EXPERIENCED SERIOUS ADVERSE EFFECTS

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or use five products, including a cream marketed for use in babies. HSA’s analysis of these products revealed that they contained potent medicinal ingredients, including steroids that led to serious adverse events in two consumers. The five products are:

Product name	Potent medicinal ingredients	Source
‘AlphaMiracHERBS’ capsules ‘迷力草本’	Chloramphenicol; Chlorpheniramine; Dexamethasone; Ibuprofen; Lovastatin; Tetracycline	Obtained from Malaysia through friend
‘Shu Jin’ capsules ‘舒筋’	Atorvastatin; Chlorpheniramine; Dexamethasone	Obtained from Malaysia through relative
‘Jolicare™’ Baby Cream	Chloramphenicol; Clobetasol propionate; Dexamethasone; Ketoconazole	Online (local e-commerce and social media platforms)
‘Jolicare™’ Collagen Cream		
‘Jolicare™’ Original Cream		

2 ‘AlphaMiracHERBS’ and ‘Shu Jin’ capsules were obtained from Malaysia, while ‘Jolicare™’ creams were sold on local e-commerce platforms (company website, Carousell, Lazada and Shopee) and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram and

TikTok). HSA has worked with the platform administrators to remove the affected listings and investigations are ongoing. Please refer to **Annex A** for photos of the products and **Annex B** for more information on the medicinal ingredients found in them.

Two consumers developed serious steroid-induced adverse effects after taking ‘Shu Jin’ and ‘AlphaMiracHERBS’ capsules

3 A woman in her 60s who took ‘Shu Jin’ capsules regularly over 10 years for joint pain had to be hospitalised shortly after she stopped taking it. She experienced fever, giddiness, joint pain and loss of appetite. She was diagnosed with adrenal insufficiency¹ (a serious steroid withdrawal condition, where the body does not produce adequate amounts of steroid hormones after stopping long-term steroid use) and osteoporosis. She told HSA that her relative had obtained the product from a clinic in Malaysia and recommended it to her.

4 A man in his 60s developed Cushing’s syndrome (a serious steroid-induced condition characterised by a round face or ‘moon face’ appearance) after taking ‘AlphaMiracHERBS’ capsules for three to four months for psoriasis (an inflammatory skin condition which causes rash with itchy, scaly patches). He gained about 10 kilograms and developed a round face. He had obtained the product from Malaysia through his friend.

5 These cases were reported to HSA by their treating physicians. ‘AlphaMiracHERBS’ was labelled as a “herbal supplement for inflammation” containing “100% vegetarian herbs”. However, contrary to its claims of being purely herbal, HSA tested it to contain dexamethasone (a steroid), chloramphenicol and tetracycline (antibiotics), chlorpheniramine (an antihistamine), ibuprofen (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug) and lovastatin (a cholesterol-lowering medicine). ‘Shu Jin’ capsules were also tested by HSA to contain multiple potent ingredients including dexamethasone, chlorpheniramine and atorvastatin (another cholesterol-lowering medicine). Long-term unsupervised use of steroids such as dexamethasone can cause increased blood glucose levels which may lead to diabetes, Cushing’s syndrome, and other serious adverse effects.

¹Adrenal insufficiency can lead to fatigue, generalised weakness, muscle and joint pain, low blood pressure, fits or shock.

“Natural, herbal” creams marketed for babies and pregnant women found to contain potent steroids

6 HSA was alerted to the online sale of ‘Jolicare™’ creams based on multiple feedback, including from a pharmacist who was suspicious of ‘Jolicare™’ cream when a three-year-old child’s chronic eczema unexpectedly improved after using it for only three days, and from a doctor who came across it on social media chatgroups among mothers. ‘Jolicare™’ products were falsely promoted as “natural, herbal” and “proven effective” for a variety of skin conditions, such as eczema, fungal infection and psoriasis. Their online sales postings carried a disclaimer that the products contained “a minimal amount of dexamethasone and clobetasol” and falsely claimed that “the dose is approved by skin specialists and is safe for all, including babies and pregnant mums”. Creams containing such potent steroids for treatment of skin conditions should be evaluated and approved by HSA, and they should only be prescribed by doctors for use under medical supervision. These products were not approved by HSA.

7 Apart from clobetasol propionate and dexamethasone, HSA detected chloramphenicol and ketoconazole (an antifungal) in all three ‘Jolicare™’ creams. These ingredients can pose serious health risks, especially in infants, children and pregnant women, if used without medical supervision.

Advisory to consumers

8 Consumers are advised on the following:

- See a doctor as soon as possible if you or other family members are using these products as they contain potent medicinal ingredients including steroids. Long-term steroid use can suppress the body’s production of steroids. Sudden stopping of these products without medical supervision may result in worsening of underlying medical conditions or other serious withdrawal conditions such as adrenal insufficiency.
- Exercise caution when buying products online or from well-meaning friends as you cannot be certain where and how these products were made and whether they have been adulterated with harmful ingredients. Only buy from reputable pharmacies or retailers’ websites or those with an established retail presence

in Singapore. Adulterated products are often manufactured under poor conditions with no quality control, and different batches of the same product may contain variable amounts of ingredients and/or different types of adulterants.

- Exercise caution when purchasing products for use in babies and pregnant women, including those that are applied on the skin such as creams, as they are more vulnerable to suffering serious adverse effects. Potent ingredients added into the creams can be absorbed into the body and cause adverse effects. Consult a doctor if you are pregnant or have a child who requires prolonged use of products intended for treatment to ensure that these products are appropriate.
- Always consult your doctor or pharmacist if you need help to manage your chronic medical conditions (such as joint pain and psoriasis).
- Be wary of products that deliver unexpectedly quick effects such as fast relief of chronic medical conditions, or carry exaggerated claims, while claiming to be “herbal” or “natural”. Contrary to the claims, they can contain potent ingredients that can seriously harm your health. Recommendations or testimonials found online can be falsified and are not easily verifiable. [Read more about supposedly herbal or natural products that turned out to be harmful.](#)

Advisory to sellers and suppliers

9 All sellers and suppliers must stop selling these products immediately. HSA will not hesitate to take stern enforcement actions against anyone who sells and/or supplies products found to be adulterated with potent medicinal ingredients. Sellers and suppliers who are selling such health products are liable to be prosecuted and if convicted, may be imprisoned for up to 3 years and/or fined up to \$100,000.

10 Members of the public who have any information on the sale and supply of these 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.

HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY

SINGAPORE

14 NOVEMBER 2022

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/>.

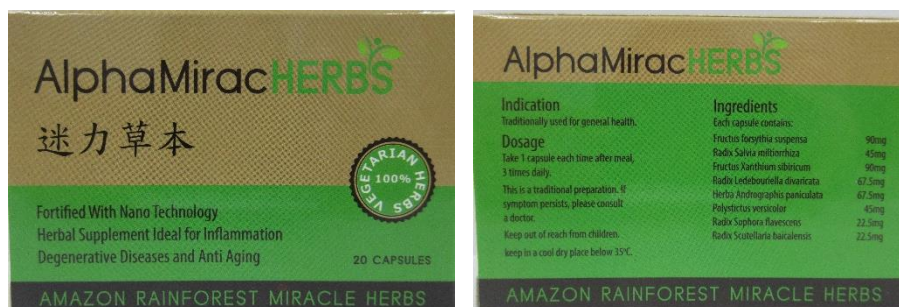
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About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that medicines, 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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PHOTOS OF 'ALPHAMIRACHERBS' THAT WAS TESTED BY HSA



PHOTOS OF 'SHU JIN' THAT WAS TESTED BY HSA



PHOTOS OF 'JOLICARE™' BABY CREAM THAT WAS TESTED BY HSA



PHOTOS OF 'JOLICARE™' COLLAGEN CREAM THAT WAS TESTED BY HSA



PHOTOS OF 'JOLICARE™' ORIGINAL CREAM THAT WAS TESTED BY HSA



POSSIBLE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF POTENT INGREDIENTS FOUND IN THE PRODUCTS

Chloramphenicol and tetracycline

Chloramphenicol and tetracycline are antibiotics used to treat bacterial infections. These are prescription-only medicines and should be used under medical supervision. Chloramphenicol can potentially cause serious side effects including blood disorders, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and headaches. The adverse effects of tetracycline include liver toxicity, teeth discolouration and increased skin sensitivity to sunlight.

Chlorpheniramine

Chlorpheniramine is an antihistamine used to relieve allergic reactions such as hives and rhinitis. It should be used under medical supervision. Side effects from the use of chlorpheniramine include drowsiness, blurred vision, vomiting, constipation and poor coordination.

Clobetasol propionate and dexamethasone

Clobetasol propionate and dexamethasone are potent steroids that are usually prescribed for inflammatory conditions and should only be used under strict medical supervision. Long-term unsupervised use of steroids (including topical use where the steroid can be absorbed into the body) can cause increased blood glucose levels which may lead to diabetes, high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders (including osteoporosis), an increased risk of infections and Cushing's syndrome (characterised by a round face or 'moon face' appearance and upper body obesity with thin limbs). Discontinuation of steroids without proper medical supervision can lead to adrenal insufficiency, a serious condition where the body does not produce adequate amounts of steroid hormones, resulting in fatigue, generalised weakness, muscle and joint pain, low blood pressure, fits or shock.

Ibuprofen

Ibuprofen is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) used to treat pain and inflammation. It can cause gastrointestinal adverse effects such as nausea, vomiting

and gastric bleeding as well as kidney injury. Other adverse effects that can occur with prolonged usage include heart problems and fluid retention.

Ketoconazole

Ketoconazole is a medicine used to treat fungal infections. The possible adverse effects associated with the inappropriate use of creams containing ketoconazole may include skin irritation, itching of the skin, skin rash and impetigo (skin infection).

Lovastatin and atorvastatin

Lovastatin and atorvastatin belong to a class of prescription medicines called statins that are used to treat high cholesterol and should be used under medical supervision. The side effects associated with statin use include elevated liver enzymes and muscle-related effects (muscle aches, muscle weakness or muscle injury).