



**HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY  
PRESS RELEASE  
31 OCTOBER 2023**

## **HSA REMOVES OVER 4,600 ONLINE LISTINGS AND SEIZED MORE THAN 60,000 UNITS OF ILLEGAL HEALTH PRODUCTS IN WEEK OF INTENSIFIED SURVEILLANCE**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) has removed 4,681 illegal health product listings from local e-commerce and social media platforms and seized 60,372 units of illegal health products at the checkpoints during Operation Pangea. This is an Internet-based enforcement action coordinated by INTERPOL, between 3 and 10 October 2023. 89 countries participated in this year's Operation.

2 The majority of the product listings taken down from local e-commerce and social media platforms were lifestyle health products. The products included:

- Sexual enhancement or male vitality products – 30%
- Products for aesthetic enhancement (Dermal fillers, Botulinum toxin, sutures and placenta injectables) – 14%
- Contraceptives – 8%
- Topical creams or ointments for skin allergy – 8%
- Weight loss products – 8%

3 During the week of heightened enforcement, HSA also worked with local enforcement agencies to seize 60,372 units of illegal health products consisting of various illegal and adulterated health products including sexual enhancement products, sedatives, herbal supplements and pain management products.

4 In one notable case, HSA was alerted to 32 boxes of a brand of “placenta product” detected at SingPost Centre by the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority. The boxes were labelled to contain injectables of placenta and marketed for aesthetic purposes. The product's claims included: “anti-ageing, remove wrinkles and rejuvenate cells” and “made in Switzerland”. However, investigations revealed that

neither the product nor the company that made it was registered in Switzerland. HSA has referred the case to INTERPOL for follow up with the relevant overseas authorities.

5 These illegal products were sold online or detected at the checkpoints and have not been evaluated and/or approved by HSA. They may also be adulterated with potent medicinal ingredients. As such, there is no assurance of their safety, quality and efficacy. Additionally, some of these products should only be prescribed by doctors for their patients, or administered only by qualified medical practitioners. If not used or administered correctly, they can lead to serious adverse events. Please refer to **Annex A** for examples of product listings that were taken down and products that were seized by HSA.

### **Regular monitoring**

6 HSA monitors activities throughout the year on local e-commerce and social media platforms and acts on feedback from the public. HSA also works closely with the administrators of these platforms who conduct their own pre-emptive screening measures to stop illegal health product listings from getting listed and educate the sellers on the regulatory controls for health products.

7 HSA continues to work closely with other local enforcement agencies to stop imports of illegal health products from being shipped into Singapore through joint operations. HSA also exchanges information with overseas regulatory counterparts and INTERPOL, and conducts joint operations to tackle the illegal sale of health products on a global level.

### **Consumer advisory**

8 Members of the public are advised:

- Do not buy prescription-only medicines such as erectile dysfunction medicines and weight loss medicines online. These medicines can only be obtained from doctors or from pharmacists with a doctor's prescription as they contain potent ingredients that can cause serious adverse effects if taken unsupervised. If obtained from other sources, they can be fake, even

if the medicines and packaging look the same. They may be contaminated, contain the wrong ingredient or wrong amount of the ingredient, or contain no active ingredient. As a result, your condition may go untreated and worsen. Consult your doctor for chronic conditions such as erectile dysfunction and obesity. Your doctor can advise on appropriate treatments.

- Do not buy or use any DIY aesthetic beauty injectable kits. Dermal fillers and botulinum toxin injections are health products which require HSA's approval before they can be supplied and should be administered by qualified medical practitioners. These DIY kits have not been evaluated for safety, quality and efficacy by HSA. They may contain unverified and potentially harmful ingredients or toxic chemicals and carry infectious organisms.
- Exercise caution when buying health products such as health supplements and cosmetic 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 such as steroids.
- 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.

### **Advisory to sellers and suppliers**

9 It is illegal to sell prescription medicines and medical devices, and adulterated health products on local e-commerce platforms. HSA takes a serious view against those engaged in the illegal sale and supply of these products 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.

10 In January 2023, HSA prosecuted a 27-year-old man who peddled 19 types of unregistered medicines including codeine tablets and syrup (prescription-only medicines for cough), and sildenafil tablets (prescription-only medicine for treating erectile dysfunction) on Instagram and Telegram. He was convicted and sentenced to 7 weeks' imprisonment.

11 In May 2023, a 23-year-old woman was charged in court and fined \$23,000 for selling and administering unregistered products to persons as an aesthetic procedure without a licence. The product "Di Sai Mi Song Ling Suan Na Zhu She Ye" (地塞米松磷酸钠注射液), which she had sold on Instagram, was tested by HSA to contain dexamethasone phosphate, a prescription-only steroid that can only be administered by qualified medical practitioners.

12 Members of the public who encounter illegal, fake or other suspicious health products are encouraged to contact the Enforcement Branch of HSA at Tel: 68663485 or email: [hsa\\_is@hsa.gov.sg](mailto:hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg).

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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](http://www.twitter.com/HSAsg).

## **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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**Examples of illegal listings of health products removed by HSA**



Korean original authentic  
filled restored cheeks chin and other...

**\$40.00**

~~\$124.95~~ -68%

Sale of dermal fillers, a medical device. The image of the product was pixelated by the seller to avoid detection.



Sale of a prescription-only medicine for treating acne. The image of the product was pixelated by the seller to avoid detection.

C-tol-mel 100 tabs Fat Destroyer



Sale of a prescription-only medicine meant to treat hypothyroidism that was illegally marketed as a “fat destroyer”.

**Examples of unregistered health products seized by HSA**

**Prescription-only medicines**





