

DH endorses recall of Chinese herbal medicines detected with pesticide residues by licensed Chinese herbal medicines wholesalers

The Department of Health (DH) today (May 17) endorsed licensed Chinese herbal medicines (Chm) wholesalers Hongkong Dongxingtang Technology Development Company Limited (Dongxingtang) and Kwok Shing Hong Medicine Company Limited (Kwok Shing Hong) to voluntarily recall from the market two batches of Chm, including Fructus Corni (batch number: 20180301) and Rhizoma Alismatis (batch number: 63022110) respectively, as organophosphate pesticides were detected in both of the decoctions prepared from the Chm.

During the DH's market surveillance, samples of the above two Chm were collected for testing. Testing results from the Government Laboratory revealed that organophosphate pesticides were detected in both of the decoctions prepared from the two samples (each kilogram of Fructus Corni contained 0.14 milligrams of triazophos, and each kilogram of Rhizoma Alismatis contained 0.26mg of triazophos and 0.15mg of chlorpyrifos). According to the limits set out by the Chinese Medicines Board of the Chinese Medicine Council of Hong Kong (CMCHK), triazophos and chlorpyrifos are not allowed to be detected in decoction prepared from Chm.

"Based on the levels of pesticide residues detected in the samples, adverse health effects will not be caused under consumption for treatment of diseases. However, long-term high-level intake of triazophos or chlorpyrifos may possibly affect the nervous system. So far, no adverse reports related to the use of the above Chm have been received. Investigations are ongoing," a spokesman for the DH said.

The spokesman added that Chm should be rinsed under running water before decocting to remove the dirt on the surface, to ensure the cleanliness of the Chm. Chm should also be fully soaked in water before decoction.

According to the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549), Fructus Corni and Rhizoma Alismatis are Schedule 2 Chm. Fructus Corni, the ripe sarcocarp of *Cornus officinalis* Sieb. et Zucc., is used to tonify and nourish the kidneys and the liver. Rhizoma Alismatis, the tuber of *Alisma orientalis* (Sam.) Juzep., is used to promote urination and drain dampness.

Preliminary investigation indicated that the above batches of Chm were imported from the Mainland. Dongxingtang (5188 8631) and Kwok Shing Hong (2547 1166) have set up hotlines for related enquiries. The DH will closely monitor the recall.

According to section 52 of the Public Health and Municipal Services

Ordinance (Cap. 132), selling any drug not of the nature, substance or quality demanded by the purchaser is liable to a maximum penalty of \$10,000 and three months' imprisonment. Upon completion of investigation, the DH will work with the Department of Justice on prosecution matters and will also refer the case to the CMCHK for possible disciplinary action.

The DH urged members of the public who have purchased the above Chm to stop using them immediately and submit them to the Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office of the DH on 16/F, AIA Kowloon Tower, Landmark East, 100 How Ming Street, Kwun Tong, during office hours for disposal. People who have taken the above Chm and feel unwell should seek advice from healthcare professionals.