

[DH urges public not to buy or use topical product with undeclared controlled ingredient \(with photo\)](#)

The Department of Health (DH) today (August 16) appealed to the public not to buy or use a topical product (no English name on the package, see photo) as it was found to contain an undeclared controlled drug ingredient.

Acting on a public complaint, the DH purchased a sample of the above product via a social media platform for analysis. Test results from the Government Laboratory revealed that the product contained betamethasone dipropionate, which is a Part 1 poison controlled under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (PPO) (Cap 138).

The DH's investigation is continuing.

Betamethasone dipropionate is a steroid substance for treating inflammatory skin disorders. Inappropriate or excessive application of steroids could cause skin problems and body-wide side effects such as moon face (facial swelling), high blood pressure, high blood sugar, skin atrophy, adrenal insufficiency and osteoporosis. Products containing betamethasone dipropionate should only be used under a doctor's directions and supplied by a pharmacy under the supervision of a registered pharmacist upon a doctor's prescription.

According to the PPO, all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be legally sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products and Part 1 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The public should not buy or use products of doubtful composition or from unknown sources. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX". The safety, quality and efficacy of unregistered pharmaceutical products are not guaranteed.

People who have purchased the product should stop using it and consult healthcare professionals if in doubt or feeling unwell after use. They can submit the product to the DH's Drug Office at Room 1856, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, during office hours for disposal.

