

Man arrested for suspected illegal sale and possession of slimming product with undeclared controlled drug ingredients including banned drug ingredient (with photo)

The Department of Health (DH) today (September 22) conducted an operation against the sale of a slimming product, namely VSlimming Herbal, which was found to contain undeclared controlled drug ingredients, including a banned drug ingredient. During the operation, a 36-year-old man was arrested by the Police for suspected illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poisons and an unregistered pharmaceutical product.

Acting upon intelligence, a sample of the above suspected unregistered pharmaceutical product was purchased from a retail store in Sham Shui Po for analysis. Test results from the Government Laboratory revealed that the oral capsules included in the sample contained sibutramine, N-desmethylsibutramine and spironolactone, all of which are Part 1 poisons under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138) (the Ordinance). The DH's investigation is continuing.

Sibutramine was once used as an appetite suppressant. Since November 2010, pharmaceutical products containing sibutramine have been banned in Hong Kong because of an increased cardiovascular risk. N-desmethylsibutramine is a substance structurally similar to sibutramine. Spironolactone is a prescription drug used in the management of heart failure and should only be used under supervision of a doctor. Side effects include headaches, gastrointestinal disturbance, hyponatraemia (abnormally low blood sodium level) and hyperkalaemia (elevated blood potassium level).

According to the Ordinance, 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 or Part 1 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The DH spokesman strongly urged members of the public not to buy products of unknown or doubtful composition, or to consume products from unknown sources. Members of the public who have purchased the above product should stop consuming it immediately. They should consult healthcare professionals for advice if feeling unwell after consumption.

The spokesman added that weight control should be achieved through a balanced diet and appropriate exercise. The public should consult healthcare professionals before using any medication for weight control. They may visit the website of the Drug Office of the DH for "[Health messages on overweight](#)

[problem and slimming products](#)" and "[Slimming products with undeclared Western drug ingredients](#)" for information.

The public may submit the product to the Drug Office of the DH at Room 1801, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, during office hours for disposal.

