

Supply of medicine for symptomatic relief of upper respiratory tract infection is stable in Hong Kong

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government today (March 4) stated that the recent sharp increase in demand for medicine for symptomatic relief of upper respiratory tract infection (URTI) is noted, which include analgesics and antipyretics, cough syrup and lozenges, in particular certain brand of medicine containing paracetamol for use as analgesics and antipyretics. The Government stresses that the overall supply of medicine for symptomatic relief of URTI is stable and the public need not to stockpile these medicine.

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In view of the potential tight supply of these medicine in the market, the Department of Health (DH) has immediately liaised with the relevant suppliers, manufacturers, the local pharmaceutical manufacturers as well as community pharmacy associations. It was noted that while the supply of specific brand of medicine may be temporarily tight due to the sharp rises in demand within a short period of time, the overall supply continues to remain stable.

In response to the anticipated demand for these medicine, the DH has also requested the Government's contract supplier to redeploy the stock, and other suppliers and local manufactures association to increase the supply to meet the needs of the local market.

The Government has all along been monitoring the supply situation of these products and closely communicating with the suppliers, local manufacturers and community pharmacy associations. If necessary, it would consider procuring these medicines from the Mainland to ensure stable supply in the local market.

According to the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, Chapter 138, all pharmaceutical products must satisfy the criteria of safety, efficacy and quality and be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board before they can be sold in Hong Kong. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of "HK-XXXXX".

Paracetamol could be used to relieve pain and fever. According to record, there are currently 777 pharmaceutical products containing paracetamol registered in Hong Kong. Members of the public can search the database of registered pharmaceutical products with English product names or ingredients via the search engine in the website of the Drug Office, Department of Health:

www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/search_drug_database.html

The DH urged members of the public that they should avoid buying medicine for self-medication and should consult healthcare professionals for

advice before taking any medications for their conditions.