

Woman arrested for suspected illegal sale of slimming product with undeclared banned drug ingredient (with photo)

A woman aged 19 was arrested today (June 15) in a joint operation by the Department of Health (DH) and the Police for suspected illegal sale of a slimming product called "MATCHA SURIMU", which is suspected to contain an undeclared banned drug ingredient.

From the DH's market surveillance, a sample of the above slimming product was purchased from an Internet seller for analysis. Test results from the Government Laboratory revealed that the sample contains sibutramine, which is a Part 1 poison under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap 138). During today's operation, the Police arrested the seller for suspected illegal sale of an unregistered pharmaceutical product and Part 1 poison.

The DH's investigation is ongoing.

Sibutramine was once used as an appetite suppressant. Since November 2010, products containing sibutramine have been banned in Hong Kong because of increased cardiovascular risk.

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. Part 1 poisons can only be sold in a pharmacy under the supervision of a registered pharmacist. Illegal sale of Part 1 poisons and unregistered pharmaceutical products are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

A spokesman for the DH strongly urged members of the public not to buy products of unknown or doubtful composition, or to consume products from unknown sources. All registered pharmaceutical products should carry a Hong Kong registration number on the package in the format of HK-XXXXX. Unregistered pharmaceutical products have not been evaluated by the Board and their safety, quality and efficacy are not guaranteed.

"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," the spokesman advised.

The public may visit the DH Drug Office's pages for health messages on [weight control and slimming products](#) and information on [slimming products with undeclared Western drug ingredients](#).

Members of the public who have purchased the above product should stop consuming it immediately. They should consult healthcare professionals for advice if they feel unwell or in doubt after consuming the product. They may submit the product to the DH's Drug Office at Room 1856, Wu Chung House, 213 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong, during office hours for disposal.

