



HSA REMOVES OVER 3,000 ONLINE LISTINGS OF ILLEGAL HEALTH PRODUCTS IN FIRST JOINT OPERATION WITH ONLINE PLATFORMS

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) removed 3,336 illegal health product listings and issued 1,471 warnings to sellers on local e-commerce and social media platforms from 23 September to 23 October 2024, in a first-of-its-kind large-scale collaboration with online platform administrators. HSA is also investigating a repeat offender for the sale of illegal health products.

2 The joint operation to clamp down on the illegal sale and supply of health products sold online illustrates HSA's commitment to protect consumers from products which are substandard or counterfeit. These products may be unsafe and carry a significant risk of harm. It builds on the close collaboration that HSA has established with online platform administrators. The eight platforms that participated in the operation are Amazon Singapore, Carousell, Ebay Singapore, Facebook, Lazada, Qoo10, Shopee and Tiktok.

Prompt action taken to remove risky product listings

3 Aesthetic enhancement products formed the majority of the listings removed, accounting for 48% (1,611) of the total listings. These products included do-it-yourself beauty injectable kits, dermal fillers, Botulinum toxin, sutures, placenta injectables, and skin products marketed for facial lifting, skin whitening, and treating conditions like acne and eczema.

4 The remaining listings removed included contraceptives (11%), antibiotics or antifungal or antiviral (10%), contact lenses (7%), sexual enhancement and male vitality products (5%), hair loss products (3%) and analgesics for pain relief (3%). Prescription only and pharmacy only medicines made up about 40% of all listings

removed. Details on the types of products and examples of listings removed can be found in the Annex.

5 Consumers are advised that these products sold online have not been evaluated by HSA for safety, quality and efficacy. In particular, do-it-yourself aesthetic beauty injectable kits comprising dermal fillers or Botulinum toxin injections are health products which require HSA's approval before they can be supplied and should be administered by qualified medical practitioners. Prescription only and pharmacy only medicines should be obtained from doctors or from pharmacists with a doctor's prescription. Contact lenses are medical devices and they must be prescribed and dispensed only by registered optometrists or contact lens practising opticians. Consumers who use these products from online sources face risk of severe adverse reactions.

Strengthening surveillance through collaboration

6 HSA and the e-commerce and social media platform administrators will continue to proactively remove illegal health product listings. Ms Annie Tan, Director of Enforcement Branch, Health Products Regulation Group, HSA, expressed appreciation for the strong support and teamwork between local e-commerce and social media platform administrators, and HSA's enforcement officers. She added, "This operation represents a significant milestone in HSA's ongoing efforts to disrupt the online sale and supply of illegal health products. By working hand-in-hand with the e-commerce and social media platform administrators, we aim to send a clear message that we are determined to clamp down on illicit sales and supplies of such products. We urge the public to remain vigilant and report any illegal, fake or suspicious health product to HSA."

7 The local e-commerce platform administrators have expressed their commitment to consumer safety and regulatory compliance. A Shopee spokesperson stated, "Shopee is committed to the health and safety of our consumers, and collaborates closely with the Health Sciences Authority to share information and proactively detect and combat the sale of illegal health products."

8 A Lazada representative commented, "We are proud to collaborate with the Health Sciences Authority (HSA) to uphold consumer safety and public health. In line

with HSA's commitment to ensuring regulatory compliance and protecting the community from harmful products, we have implemented stringent policies and measures to prevent the sale of non-compliant products. We promptly remove any items identified by HSA as violating these laws and regulations."

Advisory to sellers and suppliers

9 It is illegal to sell unregistered aesthetic enhancement products and dermal fillers, prescription only medicines, medical devices and adulterated health products on local e-commerce and social media platforms. HSA takes a serious view against those engaged in the illegal sale and supply of these products and will take strong enforcement action against such persons. Anyone who supplies such health products is liable to prosecution and if convicted, may be imprisoned for up to 3 years and/or fined up to \$100,000.

Heavy penalties for selling illegal health products

10 In September 2024, a 32-year-old man was fined \$266,500 after being prosecuted by HSA and convicted of possessing and supplying 126 types of cosmetic products which were found to be counterfeit. He had intended to sell these counterfeit cosmetic products through multiple accounts he had created on Lazada. This case marked the largest fine ever imposed for selling counterfeit cosmetic products.

11 In August 2024, a 48-year-old woman who supplied unregistered health products during her home-based aesthetic services and promoted her services on social media was fined \$19,000 and sentenced to 2 weeks' jail. HSA seized 51 types of health products including dermal fillers and vials of lidocaine carbonate injection from the woman's home.

12 In February 2024, a 30-year-old woman was fined \$18,000 for selling an unregistered skin cream, 'Star Cream (星星膏)' on several local e-commerce platforms. HSA prosecuted the woman after investigating a serious adverse event reported in a four-month-old infant who was diagnosed with Cushing's syndrome after the use of the cream. His mother had purchased the cream online. The cream was tested by HSA and found to contain clobetasol propionate, a potent steroid and ketoconazole, a medicine for fungal infections.

Consumer advisory

13 Consumers are strongly encouraged to be vigilant and A-L-E-R-T when purchasing and consuming health products:

- **AVOID** Dubious Products: Steer clear of products from unknown or unverified sources, especially online. You cannot be certain where and how these products were made and whether they have been adulterated with harmful ingredients.
- **LOOK** for Reputable Sellers: Only purchase from trusted pharmacies or well-known retailers with an established presence in Singapore.
- **EXAMINE** Claims: Be cautious and wary of products that claim to have miraculous results or “no side effects”.
- **REPORT** Suspicious Products: Help protect others by reporting dangerous or dubious products to HSA at Tel: 68663485 or email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg.
- **TRUST** Medical Advice: Seek advice from a healthcare professional and avoid self-medicating with unknown products.

HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY

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About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services and Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. HSA is a multidisciplinary authority. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. As the national blood service, it is responsible for providing a safe and adequate blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit <http://www.hsa.gov.sg/>.

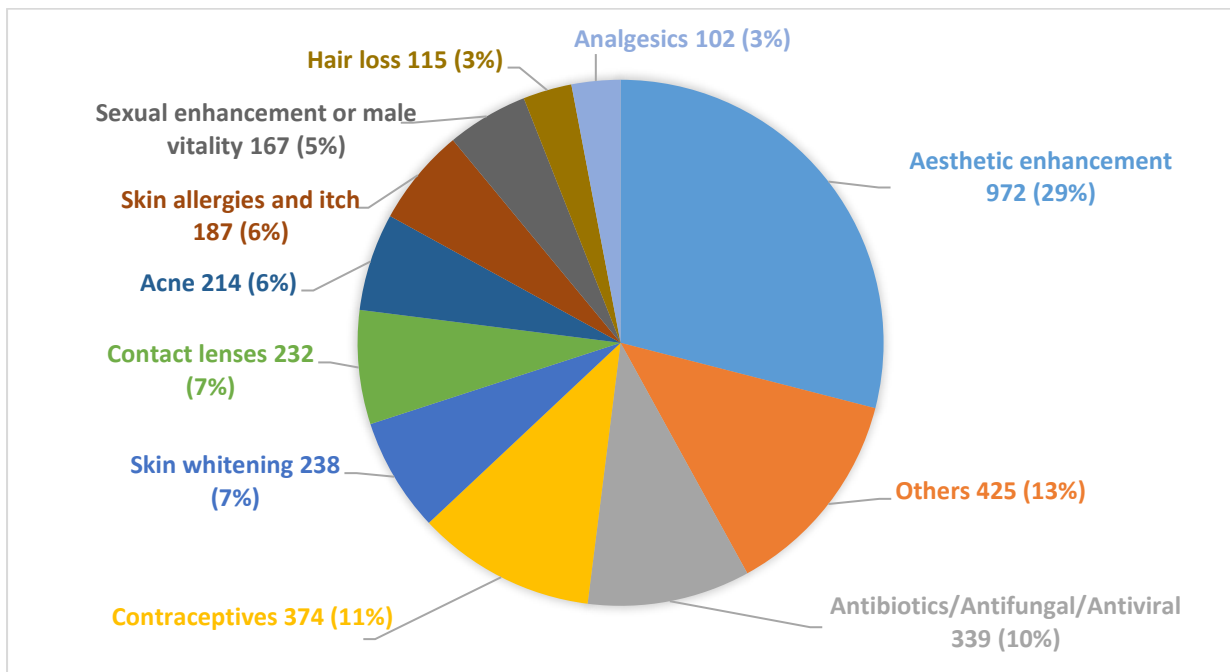
For more updates on public health and safety matters, follow us at www.twitter.com/HSAsg.

About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA ensures that medicines, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards. It contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework.

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Figure 1: Types of product listings detected and removed from local e-commerce and social media platforms



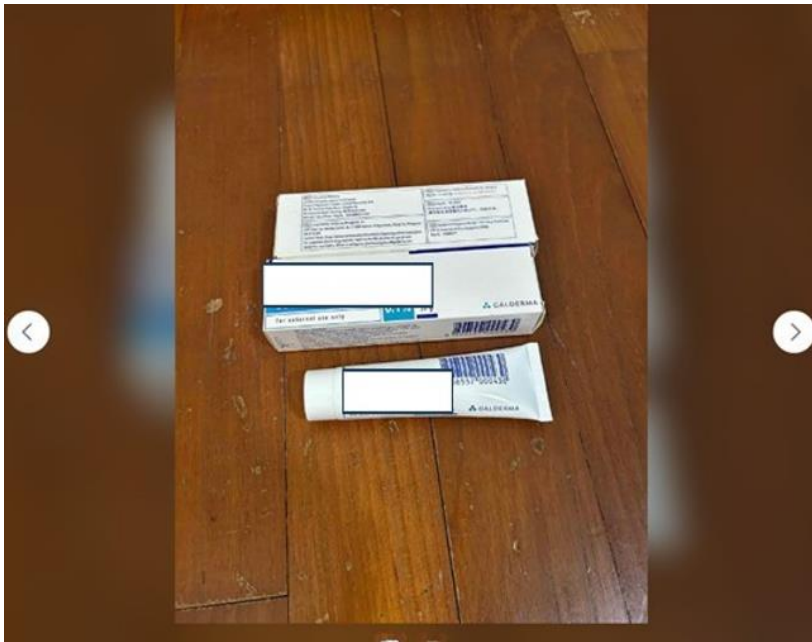
Examples of illegal listings of health products removed by HSA



Aesthetic enhancement kit with prefilled syringe and needle



Prescription only contraceptive medicine



Prescription only acne treatment gel



Skin cream for skin allergies and itch



Contact lenses