



HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE
26 AUGUST 2024

HSA ALERT: “TOUCH SKIN BY DERMACARE SKIN RELIEF TREATMENT CREAM” DETECTED TO CONTAIN POTENT STEROID; CONSUMER EXPERIENCED SEVERE SKIN REACTIONS

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public not to purchase or use “Touch Skin by DermaCare Skin Relief Treatment Cream”. The cream was touted to soothe eczema, chickenpox and insect bites. However, HSA’s test revealed that the cream contained a potent steroid (betamethasone valerate) which should be used under medical supervision. A consumer in her 50s suffered severe skin reactions from the use of the cream. Please refer to **Annex A** for photos of the consumer’s skin reaction and the product.

2 The consumer had been using “Touch Skin by DermaCare Skin Relief Treatment Cream” for about 8 years for her sensitive facial skin and would experience flare-ups (a sudden worsening of symptoms) whenever she stopped applying the cream. She had purchased the cream from a shop in Orchard Road and continued buying it from the seller via WhatsApp after the physical shop closed in 2020. In May 2024, she saw that HSA alerted the public to a similar product “Special Skin Treatment”¹ found to be adulterated with a steroid and sold on the website touchskin.com.sg. She immediately stopped the use of “Touch Skin by DermaCare Skin Relief Treatment Cream”. Two days after stopping use, she developed red, sensitive and itchy skin on her face and consulted a doctor. The doctor found her skin to be severely inflamed, sensitive to sunlight, and thinned-out with telangiectasia (spider veins) and reported the adverse event to HSA.

¹ <https://www.hsa.gov.sg/announcements/press-release/hsa-alert--three-products-found-with-potent-medicinal-ingredients>

3 HSA's investigations revealed that "Touch Skin by DermaCare Skin Relief Treatment Cream" and "Special Skin Treatment" cream were sold by the same seller. HSA had earlier tested "Special Skin Treatment" to contain a potent steroid (clobetasol propionate). Investigations are ongoing.

Harmful effects from unsupervised use of potent steroids

4 Betamethasone valerate is a potent steroid usually prescribed for inflammatory conditions. Creams containing potent steroids for the treatment of skin conditions should only be used under medical supervision. Long-term unsupervised use of such creams can cause hypersensitivity reactions, thinning of the skin and topical steroid withdrawal syndrome (burning, itching and redness following sudden stopping of prolonged use of topical steroids). They may also be absorbed into the body and cause serious adverse effects when applied to large areas of the skin or used over a prolonged period. These adverse effects include high blood pressure, cataracts, muscular and bone disorders, an increased risk of infections and Cushing's syndrome (a round face or 'moon face' appearance and upper body obesity with thin limbs).

5 Consumers should be alert to the dangers of purchasing skin creams from dubious, unfamiliar or online sources. From 2022 to July 2024, HSA had detected an increased number of creams marketed for skin conditions (e.g., rash, eczema and psoriasis) adulterated with steroids and other potent medicinal ingredients. These creams are "Touch Skin by DermaCare Skin Relief Treatment Cream", "Special Skin Treatment" cream, "Star Cream", "Jolicare™" (Original, Baby and Collagen), "Tao Ju Hui Yi Mei Li Shang Kou Hu Li Ruan Gao" ("淘聚汇益美丽伤口护理软膏") and "EUZEMA Confidence Revival Cream"^{2,3}. The majority of the creams were used in young children. As young children are more susceptible to the effects of adulterants such as steroids, they suffered serious adverse effects from the use of these creams. The creams were sold on websites, e-commerce platforms, social media platforms, and in one case, by a peddler in a makeshift stall.

² <https://www.hsa.gov.sg/announcements/press-release/2022summary>

³ <https://www.hsa.gov.sg/announcements/press-release/hsa-annualsummary2023>

Advisory to consumers

6 Consumers are advised to:

- See a doctor as soon as possible if you are using “Touch Skin by DermaCare Skin Relief Treatment Cream” (or any of the creams mentioned above). Sudden stopping of the steroid-containing creams without medical supervision may worsen underlying skin conditions or cause topical steroid withdrawal symptoms such as burning, redness, itching or peeling of skin.
- Consult a healthcare professional if you need help managing your chronic skin condition instead of risking your health with use of unfamiliar skin products.
- Exercise caution when buying products from dubious, unfamiliar or online sources, as you cannot be certain where and how these products were made and whether they have been adulterated with harmful ingredients. Adulterated products are often manufactured under poor conditions with no quality control, and different batches of the same product may contain variable amounts of ingredients and/or different types of adulterants.
- When buying health products online, only buy from reputable pharmacies or retailers’ websites, or those with an established retail presence in Singapore.

Advisory to sellers and suppliers

7 All sellers and suppliers must stop selling these products immediately. HSA will not hesitate to take stern enforcement actions against anyone who sells and supplies products found to be adulterated with steroids. Sellers and suppliers are liable to prosecution and if convicted, may be imprisoned for up to 3 years and/or fined up to \$100,000.

8 Members of the public who have any information on the sale and supply of these illegal products may contact HSA’s Enforcement Branch at Tel: 6866-3485 during office hours (Monday to Friday) or email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg.

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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Photo of consumer’s skin reaction on face and neck



Photos of the product tested by HSA

“Touch Skin by Dermacare Skin Relief Treatment Cream”

