

Press release

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Subject: Consumer Warning – heavy metals in herbal medicines

Contact: Press Office 0207 084 3535 or 0207 084 3564

Out of hours 07770 446 189 press.office@mhra.gsi.gov.uk

Consumer warning for herbal remedies containing heavy metals

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) is aware of the possible availability of unlicensed herbal medicines containing heavy metals in the UK. The MHRA advises consumers not to take the products listed in the Notes to Editor.

Concern follows a recent warning issued by Health Canada which stated that specific herbal products within the Canadian marketplace have been found to contain high levels of heavy metals. The MHRA suspects that these products may have also entered the UK market.

Roy Alder, Director of Executive Support at the MHRA said: “Medicinal products containing high levels of heavy metals pose a serious public health risk. Many of the products we suspect to have entered the UK may contain mercury, arsenic and lead. These metals can cause severe nausea, vomiting and abdominal pain. Other serious problems such as kidney damage, convulsions and coma have also been reported.”

Consumers are advised to be vigilant and aware of the potential side effects of these herbal remedies. Individuals who believe they may have taken any of these products should discontinue use and consult their pharmacist or doctor.

The MHRA is actively surveying the UK market to identify if these products are being sold. By collaborating with herbal stakeholders representing practitioners, manufacturers and retailers of Ayurvedic, traditional Chinese and western medicines, the MHRA is gaining further information and determining the possible availability of these products in the UK.

Ends

Notes to Editor:

1. Product names and manufacturers:
 - Karela tablets, Shriji Herbal Products, India
 - Karela capsules, Himalaya Drug Co., India & Charantia, UK
 - Yograj Guggul tablets, Zandu Pharmaceuticals, India
 - Sudarshan tablets, Zandu Pharmaceuticals, India
 - Shilajit capsules, Dabur India Ltd., India
 - SAFI Liquid, Hamdard-WAKF-Pakistan & Hamdard-WAKF-India
 - Maha Sudarshan Churna Powder, Zandu Pharmaceuticals, India
D&K Pharmacy, India
Chhatrishha, India
Dabur India Ltd., India
2. More product details and **photographs** are available on the MHRA Herbal Safety News website.
3. The MHRA is the government agency responsible for ensuring that medicines and medical devices work, and are acceptably safe. We enable greater access to products, and the timely introduction of innovative treatments and technologies that benefit both patients and the public.