

Alert on herbal medicine poisoning

The Department of Health (DH) has recently received notification of a case in relation to pyrrolizidine alkaloids poisoning from the Hospital Authority (HA). According to the information gathered, the affected patient obtained and consumed herbal powder from a friend who claimed that the herbal powder was dispensed by a Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP) in the Mainland, the ingredients of the herbal powder were not labelled. She was admitted to a public hospital for treatment and was subsequently discharged. Laboratory results from HA showed the presence of pyrrolizidine alkaloids in the herbal powder. It appears that a possible contributing factor for this case is consumption of Chinese medicines containing pyrrolizidine alkaloids.

DH advises members of the public to consult qualified CMPs, and obtain Chinese medicines as dispensed by CMP or from licensed Chm retailers only. Member of the public should not recklessly purchase Chinese medicines or consume Chinese medicines of unknown source. Medical advice should be sought as soon as possible if there is any discomfort after consumption.

Members of the public may visit the website of Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office of DH (https://www.cmro.gov.hk/html/eng/useful_information/public_health/index.html) for more information about safe use of Chinese medicines.

Chinese Medicine Regulatory Office

Department of Health

19 January 2026