

Dear Colleague

HOSPITALISATION AND DEATHS LINKED TO CONSUMPTION OF 2,4-DINITROPHENOL (DNP) IN FOODSTUFFS

1. I would like to alert colleagues to a number of recent hospitalisations and deaths reported across the UK relating to the consumption of 2,4-Dinitrophenol (DNP).

2. DNP is an industrial chemical that is unfit for human consumption and illegal for use in foodstuffs. Despite the best efforts to remove products from sale, this product is still available and may be used by people trying to dramatically alter their appearance, such as body builders and those attempting to achieve rapid weight loss.

3. There has been a total of 24 individual cases of toxicity reported to the National Poisons Information Service (NPIS) across the UK since January 2007 (5 with a fatal outcome). Of these, 16 cases (3 fatal) occurred in 2013 during the period up to 22 August. One non fatal case has been reported in Scotland and 2 possible cases are being investigated.

4. Products that contain DNP are difficult to identify but, include some products labelled as 'fat burners' or 'slimming aids'. Reports suggest that products may have descriptors such as 'Yellow Fat Burner' capsules, 'Fat Burning' capsules and 'Pure Caffeine 200mg' tablets. Under no circumstances should these be consumed.

5. If a member of the public presents to a health professional with any products that are labelled as or suspected of containing DNP, the health professionals should retain the product and contact the Food Standards Agency in Scotland (FSA) who will arrange for collection. Where members of the public present to health professionals but have products at home or elsewhere, either the health professional contacts FSA on their behalf or the person can contact FSA directly to arrange collection. Contact details for the FSA are provided below.

**From the Chief Medical Officer
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer
Sir Harry Burns MPH
FRCS(Glas) FRCP(Ed) FFPH
Professor Bill Scott BSc MSc DSc
(Hons) FRPharms**

Enquiries to:

Scottish Government
Health Protection Team
St Andrew's House
EDINBURGH EH1 3DG
Fiona.Goodlet@Scotland.gsi.gov.uk

23 August 2013

SGHD/CMO(2013)16

Addresses

For action

Chief Executives, NHS Boards
Chief Nurses, NHS Boards
Medical Directors, NHS Boards
Directors of Public Health, NHS Boards
Chairs, NHS Boards
Directors of Pharmacy
General Practitioners
Accident and Emergency Departments
Chief Executives, Local Authorities
CPHM
Communication Teams NHS Boards
Health Protection Scotland
NHS24

Scottish Ambulance Service
Occupational Health Leads, NHS Boards
Intensive Care Units

For onward circulation to

All registered Medical practitioners in Scotland
All registered Nurse practitioners in Scotland
Community & Hospital Pharmacists
Alcohol and Drug Partnerships
NHS Substance Misuse Delivery Leads
Local Authority Food and Environmental Health Teams

Further Enquiries:

**Rona Watters
Scottish Government
Public Health Division
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG**

6. The Scottish Government is working with the Food Standards Agency (FSA), Health Protection Scotland, NHS Boards and Local Authorities to raise awareness as to how dangerous this chemical is and to remove products from the market.

SYMPTOMS

7. Any individuals thought to have consumed DNP should be advised of the dangers. Depending on the amount consumed, signs of acute poisoning could include fever, dehydration, nausea, vomiting, restlessness, flushed skin, sweating, dizziness, headaches, rapid respiration and rapid or irregular heart-beat, possibly leading to coma and death.

8. Consuming lower amounts over longer periods could lead to cataracts and skin lesions and affect the heart, blood and nervous system. Toxic effects are more common after use of high doses, but can occur when the substance is taken in doses recommended on websites or by suppliers.

CLINICAL MANAGEMENT

9. Health professionals encountering individuals suspected of consuming this substance should inform them of the dangers and advise them to discontinue use immediately. Where patients have symptoms suggesting toxicity, they should be referred to hospital for assessment and observation. Health professionals can obtain advice on clinical management from NPIS by telephone (0844 892 0111) or via the TOXBASE® website (www.toxbase.org).

CONTACTS AND FURTHER INFORMATION

10. To report any new cases, health professionals should notify their local public health team.

11. The contact for the FSA is: Foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or Tel: 01224 285196.

12. Further information for professionals and the public is available on the FSA website: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2013/aug/dnp>; <http://www.food.gov.uk>

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely

Harry Burns

Bill Scott

HARRY BURNS
Chief Medical Officer

BILL SCOTT
Chief Pharmaceutical Officer