

Alert on herbal medicine adverse effect

The Department of Health (DH) has recently received notification from the Hospital Authority (HA) of a suspected case of adverse effects related to the Chinese herbal medicine (Chm) *Herba Centipediae*, involving two people. Without Chinese medicine practitioner (CMP)'s consultation, the patient purchased the Chm from a local store unlicensed for retailing Chm. She decocted the Chm herself. The consumed dosage was found to exceed the recommended. She and her husband both developed symptoms including oral mucosal irritation, epigastric pain, nausea and vomiting immediately after consumption of the Chm. They were both admitted to a public hospital for treatment and subsequently discharged. The suspected contributing factor for this adverse event is consumption of Chinese medicines without instruction of CMP and overdosage.

Herba Centipediae is a Chm listed in Schedule 2 of the Chinese Medicine Ordinance (Cap. 549). It is used for congested nose, cough, joint pain, headache and toothache. Adverse effects of *Herba Centipediae*, although not commonly reported, includes throat discomfort, heartburn, burning sensation over stomach, nausea and vomiting.

DH advises members of the public not to self-prescribe Chinese medicines. Besides, purchasing Chinese medicines from licensed retailers ensures that the herbal medicines come from reputable suppliers. Those who are feeling unwell should consult Chinese medicine practitioner before taking Chinese medicines. Medical advice should be sought if there is any discomfort after consumption.

Members of the public may visit the website of Chinese Medicine Division of DH (http://www.cmd.gov.hk/html/eng/health_info/pamphlet.html) for information about safe use of Chinese medicines.

Chinese Medicine Division
Department of Health
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