

25<sup>TH</sup> June 2015

## **THE HPRA ADVISES OF FATALITY LINKED TO ILLEGAL SLIMMING PRODUCT**

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### ***Consumers again warned never to purchase illegal medicines from online sources***

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) today stated it is aware of a recent death of a young Irish male following the suspected consumption of a product purchased online that contained Dinitrophenol (DNP). The HPRA again warns consumers of the potential serious health dangers of taking slimming products purchased online. The HPRA and An Garda Síochána are liaising regarding their respective investigations into the supply of the DNP product and the events surrounding the death of this man. They continue to work together to monitor and investigate instances of supply of medicines through illegal retail sales in Ireland and via the Internet. In April 2015, following coverage in the British press of the death of a young woman that was linked to DNP, the HPRA issued a national warning of the dangers of this substance.

The HPRA emphasises that products containing DNP are not fit for human consumption and have the potential to cause serious harm. It advises consumers, as it has done in the past, not to purchase any slimming products which may be illegally available online. Some of these products have been found to contain unauthorised substances which are often undeclared on the pack.

To date, a small number of tablets containing DNP have been detained by the HPRA. However, as the internet is an unregulated source of supply of slimming products and other medicines, the HPRA is concerned that products containing this substance may have been purchased by Irish consumers. The HPRA is advising consumers if they have taken any product containing Dinitrophenol (DNP) and, if they are feeling any ill effects, to contact their doctor immediately. Any remaining quantity should not be taken and can be collected by the HPRA for disposal.

According to Pat O'Mahony, Chief Executive of the HPRA, counterfeit and illegal medicines pose a serious health risk.

"The information we have at this time indicates that this young man consumed DNP and our thoughts are with his family. These investigations are on-going, and we strongly urge members of the public to never use the internet to source slimming products or any prescription medicines at any time - no amount of these products is safe to take. Bogus websites can be very sophisticated and appear to be legitimate. However, in reality they can be supplying unsafe and harmful products. Laboratory analysis of products detained in the past has shown that medicines being sold through illicit websites will often contain too little or too much of the active ingredient or may contain undeclared and harmful substances."

The HPRA welcomes any information that can assist its investigations and it can be contacted in confidence by e-mail on [enforcement@hpra.ie](mailto:enforcement@hpra.ie) or by phone at 01 634 3436.

For further information consumers are urged to access the HPRA leaflet '[Dangers of Buying Medicines Online](#)', which is available on its website at [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie)

**ENDS**

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**NOTES TO EDITOR:**

**DINITROPHENOL**

DNP is the industrial chemical called 2,4-Dinitrophenol. It is known to have serious short-term and long-term effects, which can be extremely dangerous to human health. DNP accelerates the body's metabolism, and it can do so to a dangerously fast level. Speeding up the metabolism may trigger a number of potentially dangerous side effects. Long-term use can lead to the development of cataracts and skin lesions and may cause damage to the heart and nervous system. There is also evidence from animal studies that DNP is carcinogenic and increases the risk of birth defects.

**ABOUT THE HEALTH PRODUCTS REGULATORY AUTHORITY:**

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) protects and enhances public health and animal health by regulating medicines, medical devices and other health products. The products under its remit include human and veterinary medicines, medical devices, blood and blood components, tissues and cells, organs for transplantation and cosmetics. Formerly known as the Irish Medicines Board (IMB), it became the Health Products Regulatory Authority on 1 July 2014.