

Important Recall Information: Natural health products potentially contaminated with chloramphenicol

Notice details

Since 10 October 2013, a number of Canadian companies have been voluntarily recalling several natural health products due to a possible contamination with chloramphenicol, an antibiotic associated with a rare risk of aplastic anemia, a serious blood disorder that can be fatal. This reaction is unpredictable and not related to a specific dose of chloramphenicol. Based on an assessment of the Joint Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA)[1], no safe levels of oral exposure to Chloramphenicol can be determined, and in consequence it is recommended not to use chloramphenicol in food producing animals (thereby avoiding any occurrence in food).

Other side effects that can be associated with chloramphenicol include allergic reactions in people who have sensitivity to the medication, and effects on the bone marrow leading to decreased blood cells.

The investigation in Canada has found that *Specialty Enzymes & Biotechnologies* has provided contaminated raw materials to a number of companies producing natural health products for the Canadian market. As a result, natural health products from these companies are at risk of contamination with chloramphenicol. Health Canada has requested that these companies voluntarily recall their affected products.

On 4 November 2013, the National IHR Focal Point of Canada reported to WHO that two nutritional shakes from Sequel Naturals Ltd. have been found to be contaminated with low levels of chloramphenicol: Vega One Vanilla Chai (437g and 874g formats) and Vega Sport Performance Chocolate.

Testing by the company identified chloramphenicol and Sequel Naturals Ltd., in cooperation with Health Canada, has initiated an immediate voluntary recall (as of 7 November 2013) of a number of Vega products, including nutrition shakes and sports performance drinks that have tested positive for, or that may potentially be contaminated with, the antibiotic chloramphenicol. These products are available in Canada and the United States of America and are also sold online.

It is highly unusual and remains to be clarified how chloramphenicol could have contaminated the implicated enzymes from the supplier, Specialty Enzymes & Biotechnologies. Additional information about the analytic methods used, the levels detected, and the origin of the contaminated enzymes (and detailed distribution/availability) are being sought in order to further understand the origin of the Chloramphenicol and determine if the contaminated enzymes could have been used in other products still on the market.

While the origin of the chloramphenicol contamination is still being investigated, the INFOSAN Secretariat would like take this opportunity to remind INFOSAN members to reinforce to producers the importance of traceability and sourcing ingredients only from trusted suppliers.

National IHR Focal Points have also been alerted to this issue and have been recommended to coordinate accordingly with INFOSAN Emergency Contact Points and advise consumers to beware of the potentially contaminated products.

The Specialty Enzymes & Biotechnologies' Canadian product list is available at: <http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2013/36355a-eng.php#prod>

Related information available at: <http://www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/recall-alert-rappel-avis/hc-sc/2013/36585a-eng.php>

If you have any questions, please contact the INFOSAN Secretariat (emergencyinfosan@who.int).

[1] <http://www.inchem.org/documents/jecfa/jecmono/v53je03.htm>

Hazard:

- Toxin/Chemical › Other Chemical
› Chloramphenicol

Countries: Canada

United States of America

Food category: Products for special nutritional use

Food involved: Vega nutritional shakes

WHO regions: Region of the Americas

Source URL: <https://extranet.who.int/infosan/content/important-recall-information-natural-health-products-potentially-contaminated-chloramphenico>

VEGA SPORT Performance Chocolate



VEGA One vanilla chai

