

From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride



Department of
**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

HSS(MD) 18/2015

For Action:
Chief Executives, Public Health Agency/Health & Social Care
Board/HSC Trusts/NIAS
GP Medical Advisers, Health & Social Care Board
All General Practitioners and GP Locums (*for onward
distribution to practice staff*)

Castle Buildings
Stormont
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 9052 0563
Fax: 028 9052 0574
Email: michael.mcbride@dhsspsni.gov.uk
Your Ref:
Our Ref: HSS(MD) 18/2015
Date: 9 October 2015

Dear Colleague

FURTHER DEATHS LINKED TO CONSUMPTION OF 2, 4-DINITROPHENOL (DNP)

ACTION REQUIRED

HSC Trust Chief Executives should ensure that this information is drawn to the attention of all Emergency Department staff.

HSCB should ensure that this information is cascaded to all General Practitioners and Practice Managers for onward distribution to all primary care staff.

Introduction

1. In my letter HSS(MD) 36/2013, of 23 August 2013, I drew attention to cases of toxicity, including fatal cases, linked to the consumption of DNP (2,4-dinitrophenol), and to dangers associated with 'fat burners', slimming aids, food supplements and other products containing this substance. The purpose of this letter is to alert you to an increase in cases of DNP poisoning in the UK in 2015. Between 1st January and 17th September 2015, 30 cases were reported to the National Poison Information Service (NPIS), compared with 9 cases in the whole of 2014. Five of the cases reported in 2015 are known to have died. Most of those who have been affected have been teenagers and younger adults.
2. DNP is an industrial chemical and is unfit for human consumption. It is illegal to use DNP in foodstuffs. Despite the best efforts to remove products from



sale, this product is still available and may be used by people trying to alter their appearance, such as body builders and people trying to lose weight.

Symptoms

3. Features of acute poisoning can 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. 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 high doses, but can occur when the substance is taken in doses recommended on websites or by suppliers.
4. Health professionals encountering individuals suspected of having consumed 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).
5. The Department is working with the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the enforcement community to raise awareness as to how dangerous this chemical is and to remove products from the market.
6. To report any new cases or potentially useful intelligence please contact the FSA: Foodincidents@foodstandards.gsi.gov.uk or Tel: 020 7276 8448 (out of hours: 0845 051 8486).
7. Further information for professionals and the public is available on the FSA website: <http://www.food.gov.uk/news-updates/news/2013/aug/dnp>.

Yours sincerely



DR MICHAEL MCBRIDE
Chief Medical Officer

Circulation List

Maria Jennings, FSA in NI
Ray Dolan, Food Safety Promotion Board (SafeFood)
Director of Public Health/Medical Director, Public Health Agency (*for onward distribution to all relevant health protection staff*)
Assistant Director Public Health (Health Protection), Public Health Agency
Director of Nursing, Public Health Agency
Assistant Director of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, Health & Social Care Board
Directors of Pharmacy HSC Trusts
Director of Social Care and Children, HSCB
Family Practitioner Service Leads, Health & Social Care Board (*for cascade to GP Out of Hours services*)
Alerts Office at Health & Social Care Board
All Community Pharmacies
Medical Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Governance Leads, Consultants, Occupational Health Physicians & School Medical Leads*)
Nursing Directors, HSC Trusts (*for onward distribution to all Community Nurses, and Midwives*)
Directors of Children's Services, HSC Trusts
RQIA (*for onward transmission to all independent providers including independent hospitals*)
Medicines Management Pharmacists, HSC Board (for cascade to prescribing advisers)
Regional Medicines Information Service, Belfast HSC Trust
Regional Pharmaceutical Procurement Service, Northern HSC Trust
Professor Linda Johnston, Head of School of Nursing & Midwifery, QUB
Dr Owen Barr, Head of School of Nursing, University of Ulster
Maura Devlin, HSC Leadership Centre

This letter is available on the DHSSPS website at
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/phealth/professional/cmo_communications.htm