

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE BY CASE AND MOH

4 March 2010

Toxic chemical found in “Extrusion Bean” toy

The Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE) and the Ministry of Health (MOH) would like to alert consumers to the presence of a toxic chemical found in a broad bean seed squeeze toy, “Extrusion Bean” (refer to Annex). The toy may be the cause of a recent spate of mass vomiting involving 17 primary six students at Ai Tong School.

On 4 February 2010, MOH was notified that a group of students from Ai Tong School developed vomiting, diarrhoea and stomach cramps. Subsequent investigations from MOH found that the students had earlier played with the “Extrusion Bean” toy and had not washed their hands properly prior to consuming food in school.

Laboratory tests conducted on the toy identified the presence of two phthalates - dibutyl phthalates (DBP) and diethylhexyl phthalates (DEHP). Consumption of phthalates can cause symptoms such as diarrhoea, nausea, stomach ache and vomiting.

Phthalates are mainly used as plasticizers, or substances added to plastics to increase their flexibility and durability. The two compounds (DBP and DEHP) were banned from all toys and childcare items in the European Union by the European Parliament in 2005 in view of their long term toxic effects.

MOH concluded its investigations on 25 February and immediately informed CASE of the probable chemical poisoning from the accidental ingestion of phthalate from the “Extrusion Bean” toy. There have been no further reported cases from the school after the incident on 4 February.

As a safety precaution, CASE and MOH would like to urge all consumers who own the toy, “Extrusion Bean”, to immediately discard it. Members of the public who have come into contact with the toy and exhibit symptoms such as diarrhoea, nausea, stomach ache and vomiting should seek medical help immediately.

CASE would also like all the distributors and retailers of the “Extrusion Bean” to recall and stop selling the product with immediate effect.

Consumers who had bought the “Extrusion Bean” toy should inform CASE of the outlet from which they had made the purchase. CASE can be reached at 6463 1811.

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