

Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine containing nasal decongestants – OTC products to have tighter controls

UK. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has announced today that pseudoephedrine and ephedrine contained in nasal decongestants in cold and flu remedies are to have tighter controls. This follows a public consultation initiated by the MHRA as there has been an increasing concern about the potential for pseudoephedrine and ephedrine to be extracted from over-the-counter (OTC) medicines and used in the illegal manufacture of methylamphetamine (crystal meth).

The CHMP has recommended that large packs of pseudoephedrine and ephedrine should be replaced by smaller packs of 720mg (the equivalent of 12 tablets or capsules of 60 mg or 24 tablets or capsules of 30mg) and for there to be a limit of one pack per customer. The Commission also recommended that the sale should be carried out by a pharmacist. The legal status of products containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine should be reclassified from 'pharmacy only' to 'prescription only' (POM) in 24 months time (2009) or earlier if necessary, unless the risk of the misuse of illicit manufacture of methylamphetamine is contained by the measures outlined.

References:

1. *Press Release. MHRA, 29 August 2007 (www.mhra.gov.uk)*

[Source: WHO Pharmaceuticals Newsletter]