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CDC HEALTH ADVISORY

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**Severe Illness Associated with Use of Non-Pharmaceutical
Chloroquine Phosphate**

Summary:

Chloroquine phosphate when used inappropriately can cause serious health consequences including death. Clinicians and public health officials should discourage use of non-pharmaceutical chloroquine phosphate and counsel patients and the public on the appropriate use of prescribed medications.

Background:

CDC has become aware of two individuals who ingested non-pharmaceutical chloroquine phosphate, a chemical used for cleaning fish tanks commercially available for purchase through internet websites. One of the individuals died shortly after arrival to the hospital. The second one, who was critically ill, reported to the media that they ingested the product to prevent infection with COVID-19 after seeing information on the medical use of chloroquine on TV. The product in their possession was in powder form inside a 2.2 lb container and labeled "for Ornamental Fish Use Only". In addition, CDC found unconfirmed media reports that these commercially available products for home use may be out of stock due to potential increased demand by the public.

Pharmaceutical chloroquine phosphate and hydroxychloroquine sulfate are FDA approved to treat specific medical conditions such as malaria, lupus, and rheumatoid arthritis. Currently, these medications are being studied and evaluated as treatment for COVID-19. However, in overdose situations or when used inappropriately (e.g., taking commercially available non-pharmaceutical preparations, taking chloroquine phosphate or hydroxychloroquine sulfate without a prescription, taking additional doses not recommended by a medical provider) can lead to severe toxicity including cardiac rhythm disturbances, severe hypokalemia, cardiovascular collapse, seizures, coma and death. Chloroquine phosphate has a narrow therapeutic index, which raises the risk of inadvertent overdose.

Advice for Clinicians and Public Health Officials:

1. Educate patients on the serious risks of taking non-pharmaceutical chloroquine products and other aquarium cleaning chemicals.
2. Counsel your patients on the importance of taking medications only as prescribed and as directed by medical providers.
3. Contact your local poison center (1-800-222-1222) and/or consult a medical toxicologist for specific medical management of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine poisoning.

General Advice for the Public:

1. Do not take aquarium cleaning or other chemicals that contain chloroquine phosphate. These are not intended for human consumption and can lead to serious health consequences including death.
2. Medications like chloroquine phosphate and hydroxychloroquine sulfate should only be taken when prescribed by and under the supervision of your medical provider and according to the instructions provided.
3. Seek immediate medical attention if you are experiencing any health effects after taking chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine by contacting your medical provider or your poison center (1-800-222-1222).

For More Information

- Corona virus updates (www.coronavirus.gov)
- Banner Health press release (bannerhealth.mediaroom.com/chloroquinephosphate)
- Dailymed (dailymed.nlm.nih.gov) for medical prescribing information
- American College of Medical Toxicology (www.acmt.net) for poisoning information
- Association of American Poison Control Center (www.aapcc.org)

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Health Advisory	May not require immediate action; provides important information for a specific incident or situation
Health Update	Unlikely to require immediate action; provides updated information regarding an incident or situation
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