



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HEALTH SCIENCES AUTHORITY
PRESS RELEASE

20 July 2011

HSA ALERTS PUBLIC TO COUNTERFEIT COLOURED CONTACT LENSES SOLD IN LOCAL OPTICAL SHOPS

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is alerting members of the public on its detection of counterfeit coloured contact lenses being sold in local optical shops because of public health and safety concerns. The counterfeits were fraudulently labelled as “FreshLook® ColorBlends®” Contact Lenses from CIBA VISION and found to be unsafe and of poor quality. These lenses are sold for aesthetic purposes and the correction of short sightedness. This is the first case of counterfeit contact lenses being sold by optical shops in Singapore.

2 HSA was notified of the counterfeit lenses by CIBA VISION in mid June 2011. The company was first alerted to this when it received stocks of “FreshLooks® ColorBlends®” contact lenses for exchange from several optical shops. Upon investigations, CIBA VISION confirmed that these products were counterfeits as they were not manufactured by them.

3 The packaging for the counterfeit products carries some differences from the authentic product such as typographical errors. See Annex A.

4 Acting on this information, HSA conducted raids on five of these optical shops and found them to be in possession of the counterfeit contact lenses. All counterfeit lenses from these shops have been seized. Further investigation led to information relating to possible suppliers of the counterfeit coloured contact lenses.

The Dangers of Wearing Counterfeit Contact Lenses

5 The quality and safety of counterfeit health products cannot be vouched for as their manufacturing processes and conditions are unknown. The use of a counterfeit product, in particular, one that is placed directly on the eye, may seriously affect the user’s eyesight and also potentially lead to serious complications such as eye infections, corneal ulcers (open sores in the outer layer of the eye) and blindness.

6 Laboratory analysis of these counterfeit lenses by HSA and CIBA VISION have confirmed them to be unsafe, of poor quality and deficient in many aspects. For instance, the solution which the lenses were packed in were found to be contaminated with a harmful bacteria, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* which has been known to cause serious eye infections. The counterfeit lenses in general have lower water content and were thicker in the centre of the lens. These defects minimise

oxygen penetration to the eye through the contact lenses. The lack of oxygen supply to the eye and several other defects found in the counterfeit lenses can give rise to severe eye irritation, discomfort and pain, in addition to the risk of eye infections.

HSA's actions

7 HSA is in the process of investigating the extent of the problem and pursuing the source of the counterfeit contact lenses. HSA is also stepping up its surveillance activities in optical shops and working to ensure that products sold in the legitimate market are authentic products.

8 "CIBA VISION was able to detect the counterfeit FreshLook® ColorBlends® lenses due to our strict monitoring processes and product security features. We promptly reported this issue to HSA as consumer safety is our top priority," said Raymond Yew, Business Unit Head, Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, CIBA VISION. "We view counterfeiting as a serious offence and are working closely with HSA to identify, investigate and seize counterfeit contact lenses from the market."

Consumer advisory

9 Consumers are advised to immediately:

- i. contact CIBA VISION at Tel: 1800-242-2222 from 9.00 am to 5.30 pm, Monday to Friday if they have questions on their contact lenses or visit their optometrist or optical outlets
- ii. check the contact lens boxes in their possession for counterfeits e.g. wrong typographical errors in the outer packaging and blister pack (see Annex A)
- iii. stop using the contact lens if they suspect the product is a counterfeit
- iv. consult a doctor for treatment if they suffer from any adverse reactions such as severe eye irritation, redness, blurred vision, pain, light sensitivity, unusual discomfort after using "FreshLook® ColorBlends®" coloured contact lenses despite following good contact lens hygiene practices

10 Says Ms Chan Cheng Leng, Division Director of HSA' Enforcement, "HSA takes a serious view on the dealing of counterfeit health products. The public trusts owners of optical shops and registered optometrists/opticians which are part of the legitimate supply chain of eyecare services and products. HSA will not hesitate to take punitive action against sellers who peddle counterfeit products."

11 Members of the public who are aware of counterfeit health products being sold by retailers are encouraged to contact HSA's Enforcement Branch at Tel: 6866 3485 or Email: hsa_is@hsa.gov.sg.

12 Optical shop owners and retailers are strongly reminded that they should not sell or distribute counterfeit contact lenses or products. Any persons found supplying, counterfeit medical devices are liable to a penalty of \$100,000 and/or a jail term of up to 3 years if convicted.

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For media enquiries, please contact:

Vivien Tan
Assistant Manager, Corporate Communications
Health Sciences Authority
Tel: 62130881 Email: vivien_tan@hsa.gov.sg

▪ **About the Health Sciences Authority (HSA)**

The Health Sciences Authority (HSA) is a multidisciplinary agency that applies medical, pharmaceutical and scientific expertise through its three professional groups, Health Products Regulation, Blood Services, Applied Sciences, to protect and advance national health and safety. It serves as the national regulator for health products, ensuring they are wisely regulated to meet standards of safety, quality and efficacy. It operates the national blood bank, Bloodbank@HSA, securing the nation's blood supply. It also applies specialised scientific, forensic, investigative and analytical capabilities in serving the administration of justice. For more details, visit www.hsa.gov.sg.




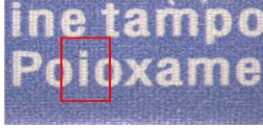
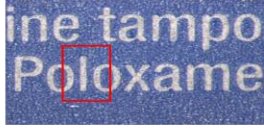
▪ **About HSA's Health Products Regulation Group**

The Health Products Regulation Group (HPRG) of HSA contributes to the development of biomedical sciences in Singapore by administering a robust, scientific and responsive regulatory framework. It ensures that drugs, innovative therapeutics, medical devices and health-related products are wisely regulated and meet appropriate safety, quality and efficacy standards.

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN COUNTERFEIT AND AUTHENTIC “FRESHLOOK® COLORBLENDS®” CONTACT LENS

Typographical Errors

	<u>Counterfeit</u>	<u>Authentic</u>
<p>Outer Box</p> 		
		
<p>Blister Pack</p> 