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FDA News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FDA Warns Consumers Against Drinking High-Strength Hydrogen Peroxide for Medicinal Use

Ingestion Can Lead to Serious Health Risks and Death

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is warning consumers not to purchase or to use high-strength hydrogen peroxide products, including a product marketed as "35 Percent Food Grade Hydrogen Peroxide," for medicinal purposes because they can cause serious harm or death when ingested. FDA recommends that consumers who are currently using high-strength hydrogen peroxide stop immediately and consult their health care provider.

FDA is working to stop companies selling high-strength hydrogen peroxide from making illegal medical claims about their products. These claims are illegal because these products do not have FDA approval and are therefore being sold illegally for medical indications without any proven clinical value. The products can instead cause significant harm. As part of these ongoing efforts, FDA today issued Warning Letters to two firms illegally selling "35 percent hydrogen peroxide" products on Web sites for the treatment of AIDS, cancers, emphysema, and other serious and life-threatening diseases. These Warning Letters are available on FDA's Web site, at <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/wlcfm/recentfiles.cfm>.

"This concentration is not approved by FDA for any purpose," said Dr. Steven Galson, Director of FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. "No one has presented any evidence that hydrogen peroxide taken internally has any medical value. In fact, consuming hydrogen peroxide in the manner touted by these websites could lead to tragic results."

FDA has never approved high-strength hydrogen peroxide to be taken internally and considers hydrogen peroxide at 35 percent strength dangerous, even if handled according to the manufacturer's directions. This high-strength hydrogen peroxide -- more than 10 times stronger than the solution used in over-the-counter drugs to disinfect minor cuts -- is highly corrosive. Ingesting hydrogen peroxide can cause gastrointestinal irritation or ulceration. Intravenous (IV) administration of hydrogen peroxide can cause inflammation of the blood vessel at the injection site, gas embolisms (bubbles in blood vessels), and potentially life-threatening allergic reactions.

FDA previously warned consumers, in an April 1989 press release, about the illegal promotion of industrial-strength hydrogen peroxide to treat AIDS and cancer, following at least one related death in Texas and several injuries requiring hospitalization.

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