Warning on Use of Chloroquine and Hydroxychloroquine

Responding to COVID-19

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has learned of two people who ingested non-pharmaceutical chloroquine phosphate, a chemical for aquarium use that is commercially available at stores and internet websites. One of the individuals died shortly after arrival at a hospital. The second individual was critically ill.

Do not ingest aquarium use products or any other chemicals that contain chloroquine phosphate. These chemicals are not intended for human consumption and can lead to serious health consequences, including death.

Seek immediate medical attention if you are experiencing any unexpected symptoms after taking chloroquine or hydroxychloroquine by contacting your healthcare provider or your poison center (1-800-222-1222).

Chloroquine phosphate, when used without a prescription and supervision of a healthcare provider, can cause serious health consequences, including death. Chloroquine, and the related compound hydroxychloroquine, should be used only under the supervision of a healthcare provider as prescribed medication and according to instructions provided.

In overdose situations or when otherwise used inappropriately, these medications can lead to severe toxicity, including abnormal heart rhythms, blood circulation failure, dangerously low levels of potassium, seizures, coma, and death.

Inappropriate uses include taking commercially available non-pharmaceutical products, taking chloroquine phosphate or hydroxychloroquine sulfate without a prescription, and taking additional doses not recommended by a healthcare provider. Chloroquine phosphate has a narrow therapeutic index — it can be toxic at levels not much higher than those prescribed — which raises the risk of inadvertent overdose.

There are no routinely available pharmaceutical products that are FDA-approved for the prevention or treatment of COVID-19.

For more information, visit: coronavirus.ohio.gov
For additional information, visit coronavirus.ohio.gov.

For answers to your COVID-19 questions, call 1-833-4-ASK-ODH (1-833-427-5634).

If you or a loved one are experiencing anxiety related to the coronavirus pandemic, help is available. Call the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 (1-800-846-8517 TTY); connect with a trained counselor through the Ohio Crisis Text Line by texting the keyword “4HOPE” to 741 741; or call the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services help line at 1-877-275-6364 to find resources in your community.
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