



San Francisco Department of Public Health

Barbara A. Garcia, MPA
Director of Health

City and County of San Francisco
Edwin M. Lee
Mayor

Herbal Tea Poisons Two San Franciscans *Public Warned to Discard Tea Purchased at Chinatown Shop Seek Medical Help if Experiencing Symptoms*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rachael Kagan, San Francisco Department of Public Health
415 554-2507, 415 420-5017 cell, rachael.kagan@sfdph.org

SAN FRANCISCO (March 10, 2017) – Two San Francisco residents are critically ill and remain hospitalized after consuming herbal tea that contained Aconite, a lethal poison, health officials announced today.

In separate incidents in February and March, a woman in her 50s and a man in his 30s became critically ill within an hour of drinking tea made from leaves supplied by the same San Francisco herbalist. Each quickly developed weakness, and then life-threatening abnormal heart rhythms, requiring resuscitation and intensive hospital care. A plant-based toxin, Aconite, was found in lab tests of the patients and the tea samples they provided.

The tea leaves were purchased at the Sun Wing Wo Trading Company (1105 Grant Avenue) in Chinatown in San Francisco. The Health Department's environmental health inspectors are removing the products consumed by the two patients from the shelves there. The Health Department is working with the proprietor to trace the source of the contamination and ensure safety for future customers. A photo of the tea purchased by the first patient is attached.

"Anyone who has purchased tea from this location should not consume it and should throw it away immediately," said Dr. Tomás Aragón, MD, Health Officer for the City & County of San Francisco. "Aconite poisoning attacks the heart and can be lethal."

People who have purchased and consumed the tea, and experienced no symptoms, are safe, but should not consume any more of it. If you consume the tea and experience symptoms, call 911 or go immediately to the nearest hospital.

Symptoms usually begin within a few minutes or up to a couple hours and can depend on the amount ingested. They can include:

- sensory abnormalities
 - numbness or tingling of the face, mouth or limbs

-
- weakness in the limbs
 - paralysis
 - cardiovascular abnormalities
 - dangerously low blood pressure
 - palpitations
 - chest pain
 - slow or fast heart beat
 - irregular heartbeats that can lead to sudden death
 - gastrointestinal abnormalities
 - nausea, vomiting
 - abdominal pain
 - diarrhea

There is no antidote for Aconite poisoning. Aconite is commonly called monkshood, helmet flower, wolfsbane, “chuanwu,” “caowu,” and “fuzi” and is used in Asian herbal medicine to treat pains, bruises and other conditions. Raw Aconite roots are generally toxic but are used only after adequate processing.

San Franciscans with questions can contact California Poison Control
1-800-222-1222 or <http://www.calpoison.org/>

###