

MEDICINES CONTROL COUNCIL



USE OF *ALEURITES MOLUCCANUS*, ALSO KNOWN AS INDIAN WALNUT

To all consumers

It has come to the attention of the Medicines Control Council that there is an increase in the usage of the seeds (nuts) of *Aleurites moluccanus* (L.) Willd., also known as Indian Walnut, Nuez de la India, Candleberry or Kemiri. The product is advertised and sold online as a natural weight loss solution, with extraordinary claims made about its effect in stimulating weight loss. The Medicines Control Council has not evaluated any products containing this ingredient for safety, effectiveness or quality, and has therefore not evaluated any of the evidence for their use. The Medicines Control Council is not aware of any human clinical trials evaluating the oral use of this nut for such purposes.

It is, however, known that the seeds (nuts) and other parts of the plant may potentially be toxic due to the presence of phorbol esters, saponins, toxalbumin and hydrogen cyanide. These compounds have irritant properties and are, therefore, very strong purgatives. They may also act as potent tumour promoters (co-carcinogens). Phorbol esters can also be very irritating to the skin and eyes and ingestion of the seeds (nuts) has been reported to cause vomiting, gastrointestinal pain, and diarrhoea. The toxic effects in humans are reported to range from severe gastrointestinal irritation to death.

Over the years, various health agencies have received reports of the seed's toxicity. Agencies in countries such as Spain, Argentina, Chile and Brazil have prohibited the use of the seeds due to deaths reportedly caused by their ingestion for weight loss purposes.

The Medicines Control Council would like to warn consumers that the action of this nut appears to be intended to induce vomiting and/or diarrhoea. There is no other evidence that suggests any other mechanism that would aid in weight loss.

Council therefore encourages all consumers to be mindful of the potential toxicity and public health risks associated with the use of Indian Walnut (*Aleurites moluccanus*) and recommends that its use be avoided in the interest of public safety. Furthermore, all sellers of products containing these nuts or preparations thereof when intended to be used as a slimming agent, are reminded that these products are subject to registration as medicines. Effective control of such products is in the best interests of the public, and will be pursued with the necessary rigour.

DR JC GOUWS
REGISTRAR OF MEDICINES