



## Department of Human Services

Incorporating: Health, Community Services, Mental Health, Senior Victorians and Housing

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### **BINDEEZ BEADS - WARNING ABOUT POTENTIAL POISONING RISK IN CHILDREN**

#### **An update for Emergency Departments and Intensive Care Units – 7 November 2007**

Dear Colleagues

I am writing to inform you of a potentially hazardous children's toy, Bindeez beads that, if swallowed, may result in serious health effects.

Bindeez beads are a popular children's toy that consists of numerous small plastic beads that when placed together and sprayed with water join together permanently in the designated shape.

Two children, aged 2 years and 10 years were recently admitted to ICU at Westmead Children's Hospital (NSW), in or close to coma. Investigation has found that the children had large amounts of gamma-hydroxybutyrate ("GHB"; the "date rape" drug) in their bodies. Both children had consumed a large quantity of "Bindeez Beads".

The beads consumed by the first child were analysed and found to contain the chemical 1,4 butanediol.

In the body 1,4 butanediol is metabolised to 4 hydroxybutyrate (also known as gamma-hydroxybutyrate).

Samples of Bindeez beads purchased obtained from the importer also contained the same chemical.

Contact with the manufacturer in Hong Kong has revealed that the toxic chemical has been incorrectly substituted for a safe chemical in the manufacture of the beads.

A child in Queensland has also been affected by putting this toy in his mouth.

Upon ingestion, an individual (child or adult) with gamma-hydroxybutyrate poisoning may present with the following symptoms within 1 – 6 hours post ingestion:

- Early headache +/- vomiting
- Confusion and drowsiness
- Ataxia
- Seizure activity
- Decreased level of consciousness
- Loss of protective airway reflexes requiring endotracheal intubation and ventilation

These beads have now been banned in most States in Australia and also in New Zealand.

If you treat any child that you think may have been affected by this product please ring the Environmental Health Unit, Public Health Branch, Department of Human Services on 1300 761 874.

Yours sincerely

DR JOHN CARNIE  
Chief Health Officer

