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'Iodide' tablets seller may face charges

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The owner of a Sheung Wan pharmacy may face charges after he was found selling what he alleged were iodide tablets, the food and health chief says.

Polysurplus Pharmaceutical store in Wing Lok Street was found to be offering for sale about 30 bottles of tablets labelled as potassium iodine. It was the only one of about 100 stores checked by Department of Health officers found to be trading in what it claimed to be iodide tablets, which cannot be sold legally over the counter. But the tablets were found to contain only trace amounts of iodine.

Undersecretary for Food and Health Gabriel Leung said new labels on the bottles claimed the contents were iodide, which has been in demand due to radiation fears related to the Japanese nuclear crisis.

'There should be no iodine tablets for sale in retail outlets in Hong Kong,' he said. 'It is also unnecessary that people in Hong Kong use the iodide tablet. They should only be used under strict medical guidance.'

Pharmacies have received a growing number of inquiries about iodide, which the Japanese government is distributing in Japan to minimise the harmful effects of radiation.