



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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**Press Statement**

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## **CAP: Ban talcum powder and talc-based products**

The Consumers Association of Penang calls on the Ministry of Health to ban talcum powder and talc based products.

Talcum powder has been directly used on the skin as an effective absorbent to help deodorise and for imparting a silky touch. The primary component in talcum powder is magnesium silicate hydroxide (commonly known as talc). Talc is similar to asbestos in composition, it is found in baby powder, eye shadow, blush, and deodorant. Talc is linked to ovarian cancer and respiratory problems.

Even though talc is widely used in cosmetics around the world, the possibility of asbestos-free talc being carcinogenic has prompted the European Union to ban talc-based cosmetics altogether.

Recently the healthcare giant Johnson & Johnson announced that it will stop selling its talc-based Johnson's Baby Powder in the US and Canada.

The firm had faced thousands of lawsuits from consumers who claim that its talc products caused their cancer. The move comes after years of litigation where Johnson & Johnson has been ordered to pay out billions of dollars in compensation.

In 2016, Johnson & Johnson was ordered to pay \$72 million in damages to the family of an Alabama woman who died from ovarian cancer allegedly caused by using the company's Baby Powder and other products that contained talc for feminine hygiene.

In Malaysia, ovarian cancer is the fifth most common cancer amongst women, with about 500 being diagnosed with the disease each year. It is a common cancer among women who are above 50 years of age and it was most prevalent among the Malays followed by Chinese and Indians. Ovarian cancer is known as particularly deadly because it is a silent cancer as it grows quietly and is often detected at the final stages.

Talc is toxic as its particles can cause tumours in human ovaries and lungs. Talc particles are capable of moving up the reproductive system and embedding themselves in the lining of the ovary. Researchers have found talc particles in ovarian tumour and have found that women with ovarian cancer have used talcum powder in their genital more frequently than healthy women.

Talcum powder also poses a major risk to our lungs as its tiny particles may easily work their way into them. The puffy white cloud of powder once airborne and is inhaled by babies and other users. The inhalation of powder during diaper changing sessions has led to injuries and even death of babies. Talc may cause a baby's airways to swell and cause pneumonia. Talcum powder has also been linked to causing asthma in children.

Statistics have shown that several thousand of infants each year have died or become seriously ill following accidental inhalation of baby powder. Talc is used on babies because it absorbs unpleasant moisture. Dusting infants with talcum powder endangers their lungs. Exposing children to this carcinogen is unnecessary and dangerous.

In spite of the dangers associated with talcum powder there are numerous brands in the market and some of these brands target babies.

In view of the dangers associated with talcum powder and products containing talc. The Consumers Association of Penang calls on the Ministry of Health to ban talcum powder and talc-based products.

Meanwhile consumers are advised to use powder which is made from corn or rice flour. Mothers are advised to use ointments instead of medicated powders for rashes in babies.



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