2,4-dinitrophenol (DNP)

The dangers of DNP (2,4-dinitrophenol) and the steps we take to limit its availability and reduce risk to the public.

The chemical 2,4-dinitrophenol (DNP) is a highly toxic industrial chemical mainly used as a pesticide. It is illegal to sell DNP for human consumption. Under current legislation those wishing to buy, sell or keep DNP may need to apply for a license.

Danger to health

We are aware that DNP has contributed to a significant number of deaths, as well as instances of serious harm to health, in the UK.

DNP is poisonous to humans and those taking it may experience:

- nausea
- vomiting
- restlessness
- flushed skin
- sweating
- dizziness
- headaches
- rapid breathing
- an irregular heartbeat

Cataracts and skin lesions may also develop, as well as damage to the heart and nervous system. Serious illness and death can then occur.

Marketing and sale

In recent years, DNP has been marketed and sold as a weight loss tool to consumers wishing to lose weight.

Despite its dangers, DNP has gained in popularity amongst the fitness and bodybuilding communities. We also know that it has been sold to consumers living with eating disorders or who have body image concerns.

In many cases the harmful effects of DNP are underplayed by those promoting and selling it.

DNP is a yellow powder but is usually made into tablet or capsule form before being sold to the public. It might be sold on a website, via a social media account, in a food supplement shop or via people at the gym.

National Food Crime Unit activity

The National Food Crime Unit (NFCU) and our law enforcement partners take the marketing and sale of DNP for human consumption very seriously. UK sellers of DNP can be prosecuted for offences under the Food Safety Act 1990 and potentially more serious criminal charges.
Those selling this dangerous chemical may find themselves serving long prison sentences.

If you see DNP for sale in any form, we need you to report it to the National Food Crime Unit as soon as possible.

If you have taken DNP, please contact a doctor or medical professional without delay.