



March 30, 2020

Severe Illness with non-Pharmaceutical Chloroquine Phosphate

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a health safety alert to inform the public that commercially available non-pharmaceutical chloroquine phosphate, such as that used in aquariums, is not safe and does not provide protection from COVID-19 infection.

The Issue: There have been two cases where people ingested chloroquine phosphate used in aquariums in an attempt to prevent COVID-19 infection. One patient died and the other is critically ill.

There are no medications to treat or prevent SARS CoV-19 transmission at this time. Based on theory and a small study, the FDA and other organizations are evaluating medications such as chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine in patients with COVID-19 infection. These medications have been highlighted to the public, often as a treatment, which remains unproven.

Chloroquine phosphate, when used without a prescription and supervision of a healthcare provider, can cause serious health consequences, including death. Clinicians and public health officials should discourage the public from misusing non-pharmaceutical chloroquine phosphate. Clinicians should advise patients that chloroquine, and the related compound hydroxychloroquine, should be used only under the supervision of a healthcare provider as prescribed medications.

The CDC recommends that clinicians:

- Educate patients on the serious risks of misusing non-pharmaceutical chloroquine products and other aquarium use chemicals.
- Counsel patients on the importance of taking medications only as prescribed and as directed by healthcare providers.
- Contact your local poison center (1-800-222-1222) to report cases and to obtain specific medical management of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine poisoning.
- Adverse events related to pharmaceuticals can be reported to the [FDA MedWatch program](#) (be sure to include “Indian Health Service” in the reporter section (section G) of the FDA 3500 form. Instructions for reporting Adverse Drug Events can be found on the [IHS Pharmacovigilance Website](#).

The full [CDC Health Advisory](#) can be viewed online.