

# Herbal drug crackdown: Millions face having to buy remedies on black market as Europe tightens the rules

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Last updated at 7:57 AM on 26th October 2009

Patients could lose access to safe herbal medicines under EU rules, it was claimed yesterday.

Instead they could end up buying potentially dangerous supplies from the black market, say herbalists.

Sales of all herbal remedies, except for a small number of products for 'mild' illness, will be banned to the public under the new law to come in in 2011.



Remedy: At least six million Britons have consulted a herbal practitioner in the past two years, says research

Almost 2,500 UK qualified herbalists and Chinese medicine practitioners will also lose the right to supply a wide range of herbal medicines, because they are not signed up to a statutory regulation scheme.

Unlike healthcare professionals, there is no regulation of herbalists.

The Government has launched a consultation on whether to bring in statutory regulation - which herbalists support. However, many fear the consultation process is too complicated, which could affect the chances of its success.

At least six million Britons have consulted a herbal practitioner in the past two years, according to research.

Leading medical herbalist Dr Ann Walker said: 'At present patients have access to top quality herbal products that are manufactured only for professional use, but we won't be allowed to supply them.

'Traditional remedies from China and India will only be available through the internet or backstreet suppliers, which could pose a serious health risk to the public.'

Dr Michael Dixon, of the Prince's Foundation for Integrated Health, said: 'We fear if the Government refuses statutory regulation, we will see a black market in herbal products, with unlicensed, potentially dangerous remedies.'

Some of these 'backstreet' medicines have been found to contain toxic heavy metals.

Dr Dixon said statutory regulation was 'essential' but the public consultation closes on November 2. The Department of Health said there was no timeline for further action on a regulation scheme.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1222980/Herbal-drug-crackdown-Millions-face-having-buy-remedies-black-market-Europe-tightens-rules.html#ixzz0V231UtSn>