

# Kidney-toxic And Cancer-causing Chinese Herbal Supplements Are Recalled

**E**ast Earth Herb, Inc. of Eugene, Oregon issued a recall on November 21, 2000, of its Jade Pharmacy brand Meridian Circulation tablets and liquid extract and Jade Pharmacy brand Quell Fire tablets because they present a serious health hazard to consumers. The products contain aristolochic acid, a potent cancer-causing and kidney-toxic agent found in certain plants and botanicals.

About 600 species of the plant family Aristolochiaceae contain this chemical.

Meridian Circulation and Quell Fire were distributed throughout the U.S. through a variety of complementary-alternative-medicine proponents. A list of the recalled products and their lot numbers appears on this page.

We reported in the July 2000 issue of *Worst Pills, Best Pills News* that the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Office of Nutritional Products, Labeling, and Dietary Supplements wrote to trade and lobbying groups representing the herbal and dietary supplement producers asking these organizations to inform their members about the serious problems that had been seen with herbs containing aristolochic acid.

Kidney failure was reported in Belgium in 1993, where more than 70 cases were associated with the use of a weight loss product containing aristolochia, a source of aristolochic acid. An emergency ban on the import, sale and supply of products containing aristolochia went into effect in Britain on July 28, 1999, following a review by regulators of two cases of kidney failure in patients using Chinese herbal

## The lot numbers covered in this recall are:

Product	Lot Number	Expiration Date
Meridian Circulation tablets	#2404	9/01
Meridian Circulation tablets	#2952	5/03
Meridian Circulation tablets	#3506	2/04
Meridian Circulation liquid	#9609097	11/01
Meridian Circulation liquid	#9707062	9/02
Meridian Circulation liquid	#9804021	6/03
Meridian Circulation liquid	#9907026	9/04
Quell Fire tablets	#2079	4/01
Quell Fire tablets	#2623	4/02
Quell Fire tablets	#2832	11/02
Quell Fire tablets	#3012	8/03
Quell Fire tablets	#3140	11/03
Quell Fire tablets	#3553	4/04
Quell Fire tablets	#3830	7/05

medicines containing aristolochia for the treatment of eczema.

*The New England Journal of Medicine* on June 8, 2000 published a study done by Belgian researchers on June 8, 2000 who looked at the risk of kidney and other types of urinary tract cancers in patients who had lost a kidney due to herbs containing aristolochia. Among 39 patients who agreed to participate in the study, there were 18 cases of various types of cancer. Nineteen of the remaining patients had pre-cancerous changes in the cells of the urinary tract and two patients were normal.

We contacted the East Earth Herb company and asked them how long their products had contained aristolochic acid. They did not know.

The FDA has no practical legal authority to protect the public from dangerous dietary and herbal supplements that are promoted for unsubstantiated uses since the passage of the Dietary Supplement

Health and Education Act of 1994. In the unregulated marketplace for dietary and herbal supplements it's "let the buyer beware."

## What You Can Do

Using unregulated dietary and herbal supplements is like playing Russian (Chinese?) Roulette with one's health and safety. These products should not be used.

Consumers who have purchased Jade Pharmacy brand Meridian Circulation tablets or liquid extract or Jade Pharmacy brand Quell Fire tablets should stop its use immediately and return it to the place of purchase for a full refund. Consumers with questions should contact East Earth Herb at 1-800-827-4372.

Beyond this latest instance of unsafe herbals and food supplements, there is an urgent need to repeal or drastically amend the 1994 Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act.