

# PHS Health Protection Alert

Title	Description
Event	Contamination of vodka with isopropyl alcohol
Alert reference number	2025/18
Recipients of this Alert and Action required	<p>Directors of Public Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cascade to Alcohol and Drug Partnerships</li> </ul> <p>NHS Board Health Protection Teams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- cascade to Emergency Departments, Acute Sector Medical Directors, and local authority colleagues for awareness</li> <li>- request clinicians to advise HPTs of suspected cases for onward notification to FSS</li> <li>- use the context below to record suspected cases on HP Zone</li> </ul> <p>PHS Executive Team, CMO Office (CMO and DCMO), SG Health Protection, PHS OOH1, PHS OOH2, PHS EPRR, PHS Comms, PHS Microbiology, Food Standards Scotland (FSS), NHS24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- for information</li> </ul>
Alert status	<p>As above:</p> <p>4. for action - monitoring, wider dissemination and specific measures to be taken by recipient</p>
Date of issue	July 25th 2025
Source of event information	Food Standards Scotland
Contact	<a href="mailto:phs.eph@phs.scot">phs.eph@phs.scot</a> (EPH Team Mailbox)
Authorised by	Dr Jim McMenamin, Head of Division (Infection Services)
HPZone context	Contaminated Vodka 2025

## Situation

Food Standards Scotland (FSS) has issued a **public health warning** after lab results from counterfeit vodka seized this week confirmed the presence of isopropyl alcohol, which can be harmful if consumed.

The counterfeit vodka recovered was sold in 35cl bottles (commonly known as half bottles) and fraudulently labelled as Glen's.

The scale of distribution of the counterfeit product is still unknown.

## Background

A similar contaminated vodka incident occurred in August 2024 and resulted in several hospitalisations. A press release was issued at that time, which led to significant recoveries of contaminated product and reduced the likelihood of further hospitalisations.

## Assessment

When consumed, even small amounts of isopropyl can be dangerous. Symptoms of isopropyl alcohol poisoning include abdominal pain, vomiting, dizziness, headaches, confusion, slow breathing, and in severe cases, coma or death. Counterfeit products with isopropyl alcohol will smell and taste very different to normal alcohol.

A similar media approach to August 2024 is being used to reduce the potential for wider exposure.

## Recommendations

Directors of Public Health are requested to share this alert with Alcohol and Drug Partnerships.

NHS Board Health Protection Teams are requested to share this alert with clinicians in Emergency Departments, local authority colleagues, and Medical Directors to increase awareness.

Local clinicians are requested to notify Health Protection Teams of suspected cases and HPTs are requested to ensure that details are shared with FSS ([foodcrime@fss.scot](mailto:foodcrime@fss.scot)).

Local Authority Environmental Health teams are requested to alert HPTs and FSS to any suspected cases of which they become aware.

## Context

NHS Board HPT colleagues, please use the context **Contaminated Vodka 2025** to record suspected cases on HP Zone.