



How to Safely Buy Medicine Online

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There's no limit to the types of products you can purchase online. You can even purchase prescription medicine over the Internet. Ordering your prescription online does provide some degree of ease because the medicine is delivered to your home. However, this convenience can come at a cost.

In the United States, it is believed that the majority of counterfeit medicines are purchased online. Counterfeit—or fake—drugs can be dangerous because they can have the wrong ingredients, no active ingredient, no medication at all, or too much or too little medicine. They can also contain harmful ingredients such as paint, poison, and arsenic.

That's why it's important to learn how to protect yourself when purchasing medicine online.

Only purchase medicines online from credible sources. The best thing you can do to avoid getting counterfeit medicine is to ensure the online pharmacy you purchase from is accredited by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacies (NABP). These pharmacies are designated as being Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites (VIPPS). That means the site is complying with both the NABP criteria and its state licensure requirements. **Consider the medicine's price.** If the price of the medication is way below the price you would pay at most other pharmacies, then this could be an indication that the medicine might be counterfeit. **Be an educated consumer.** Ask your doctor, pharmacist, or nurse about what your medicine should do, what it should look like, and its possible side effects. Another source for this information is the medicine's manufacturer. If you're experiencing any side effects, or the medicine is not working the way your healthcare providers described, it's important to discuss these occurrences with your healthcare provider or pharmacist. It is also important to report any changes in the drug's appearance, packaging, texture, or taste.

The best way to avoid purchasing counterfeit medicine is to be well informed and selective about where you purchase your medications. And if you think you've purchased a counterfeit medicine, you can contact the FDA's Division of Drug Information at druginfo@fda.hhs.gov or 888-463-6332.

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