



## Online Pharmacy Safety - Who to Trust; Ways to Save

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These days, we can buy anything online, including medications. The popularity of online shopping is skyrocketing due to convenience and price reductions. Many times, consumers may be able to save money by ordering items from outside the U.S. or from unknown online providers. While you may enjoy these cheaper prices for clothing and other nominal items, there is one product that you should take extra precaution with when ordering online: your medicine.

### Online Pharmacies

If you are constantly on the move, the ability to fill your prescription online can be very appealing. However, many of these online pharmacies are illegitimate and are accompanied with serious and possibly life-threatening risks. Buying prescriptions online can put you at risk of stolen personal information, spam on your computer, and most dangerously, receiving incorrect medications.

Rogue online pharmacies often send different quantities of prescriptions, use dangerous ingredients such as dry wall or rat poisoning (yikes!), or send completely altered medicines. The altered drugs may be...

- Fake prescriptions with no active ingredients
- The incorrect dosage
- Contain dangerous ingredients
- Out-of-date or expired
- Uncompliant with standards
- Incorrectly labeled, stored or shipped

### Who to Trust?

With a 96 percent chance that an online pharmacy does not comply with the U.S. pharmacy compliance laws and practice standards, how do you know if an online pharmacy is safe? When searching for an online pharmacy, you should be on the lookout for a few things:

- Be sure the company is located inside the United States. International websites have a higher risk of being fraudulent.
- A licensed pharmacist is available to help patients on the site.
- Prescription drugs require a prescription. It is illegal to receive prescription drugs without a legitimate prescription from your doctor. If a site offers these drugs without a prescription, you should not use the website.
- A valid mailing address and contact information is provided.
- Prices seem "too good to be true." A cut in price is not worth the risk to your life.

Some websites create fake logos and layouts that can look official, so you should be aware of these other features in order to detect a legitimate pharmacy website. The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, which has been responding to the threat of rouge drugs outlets online for nearly two decades, also publishes lists of accredited online pharmacies and of suspicious websites.

### ".pharmacy" Domain

If you are still unsure of an online pharmacy's legitimacy, you can look for the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's (NABP) Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites™ Seal. Another indication is that the web address ends in ".pharmacy." While some commercial pharmacies do have website addresses ending in .com, .pharmacy indicates that the company adheres to standards developed by a global coalition, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. This seal recognizes a safe website that meets all state licensing requirements. The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's VIPPS website lists all the pharmacies that have acquired this seal. Safe.pharmacy is another source you can use to check questionable websites, and it identifies safe online pharmacies around the globe.

**Other Ways to Save**

Patients are usually lured into illegal online pharmacies when they are desperate to find a price reduction on their medications. There are other, legal ways you can save money.

- You can shop brick-and-mortar pharmacies in your area. GoodRx is a reliable source that finds discounts and provides coupons for over 70,000 local and mail-order pharmacies in the United States.
- If you are unable to afford your medications or other healthcare expenses, you can find a Patient Assistant Program on NeedyMeds.org.
- There are also many online sites and apps that can provide you with credible information about medicine. They may offer educational information or coupons for you to use.

Stay safe and only use trusted online sites for your prescription needs.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Buying Medicines Online: It's Convenient and Private, But Beware of "Rogue Sites"

**LOCATIONS:**

- FRANCISCAN HEALTH CARMEL
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH INDIANAPOLIS
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH MOORESVILLE
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH CROWN POINT
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH DYER
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH HAMMOND
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH MICHIGAN CITY
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH MUNSTER
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH CHICAGO HEIGHTS
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH OLYMPIA FIELDS
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH CRAWFORDSVILLE
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH LAFAYETTE CENTRAL
- FRANCISCAN HEALTH LAFAYETTE EAST
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