



American Medical Women's Association
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Counterfeit Drugs: What Physicians Need to Know

The Facts:

- The growing use of counterfeit drugs is a global problem.¹
- Counterfeit drugs may not have the required therapeutic agent or may contain other active compounds.^{2,3}
- Counterfeit drugs may contain toxic contaminants, some of which have caused patient deaths.^{4,5}
- 88% of patients who purchase prescription drugs online do not discuss it with their provider.⁶
- 96% of online pharmacies operate illegally.⁷
- Patients most likely to consider purchasing medications online are those who are younger, have higher incomes, and purchase other items online.⁸
- Physicians and clinics may have unknowingly purchased counterfeit drugs.⁹

What Physicians Can Do:

- Instruct patients to only fill prescriptions at licensed pharmacies.
- Inform patients that buying prescription medications on-line is risky, even from what appears to be a Canadian pharmacy. There is no guarantee of the quality, efficacy or safety of the medication.^{5,10}
- Distribute FDA literature on counterfeit drugs. (fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/UCM196293.pdf)
- Educate patients about red flags concerning on-line pharmacies:¹¹ (1) allowing medication purchase without a valid prescription, (2) pharmacist unavailable, (3) low prices too good to be true, (4) spam email offering discounts, and 5) location outside of the U.S. or offer of worldwide shipping.
- When ordering medications, verify the pharmacy vendor's license with the [state board of pharmacy](#).
- Report suspicious activity and adverse events:
fda.gov/Safety/ReportaProblem/ucm059315.htm fda.gov/safety/medwatch,

How Patients Can Verify an On-line Pharmacy:¹²

- Check the pharmacy's license with the [state board of pharmacy](#) (or equivalent state agency).
- Ensure that the pharmacy requires a valid prescription from a licensed provider, provides a physical address and telephone number in the U.S., and has a licensed pharmacist to answer questions.
- Check the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's "[List of Not Recommended Websites](#)." (Not being listed does not necessarily mean it is safe.)
- Look for the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy's (NABP) Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites ([VIPPS](#)[®]) Seal. This seal indicates satisfaction of state licensure requirements and other NABP criteria. These sites will have a ".pharmacy" domain.

¹http://www.who.int/medicines/regulation/ssffc/publications/GSMS_Report.pdf

²fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/CounterfeitMedicine/ucm338283.htm ³<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm431071.htm>

³<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm431071.htm>

⁴<http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/88/4/10-020410/en/>

⁵<https://www.dea.gov/docs/Counterfeit%20Prescription%20Pills.pdf>

⁶<https://buysaferx.pharmacy/public-awareness-campaigns/canadian-online-pharmacies/factsheets/online-pharmacy-consumer-behavior-and-perception-survey/>

⁷<https://nabp.pharmacy/called-canadian-pharmacies-danger-consumers-nabp-reports>

⁸<https://buysaferx.pharmacy/public-awareness-campaigns/canadian-online-pharmacies/factsheets/online-pharmacy-consumer-behavior-and-perception-survey>

⁹<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/counterfeit-cancer-drug-avastin-circulating-in-us-company-warns>

¹⁰<https://nabp.pharmacy/called-canadian-pharmacies-danger-consumers-nabp-reports>

¹¹<https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm048396.htm>

¹²<https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/BuyingMedicinesOvertheInternet/BeSafeRxKnowYourOnlinePharmacy/ucm318487.htm>