

Safety Tips for Buying Medications Online

Considering an Online Pharmacy?

Online pharmacies can offer convenience, privacy, and cost savings. However, some websites may sell medications that are unsafe or even harmful. Protect your health and your family's well-being by learning how to identify the signs of a safe online pharmacy versus a potentially risky one.

Staying Safe with Online Pharmacies

The Food and Drug Administration estimates that there are approximately 35,000 active online pharmacies, yet only 5% follow US pharmacy laws and practice standards. Be extra cautious when buying medications from international sources, such as pharmacies in Mexico, as they are not regulated in the same way as pharmacies in the US.

Unfortunately, some illegal organizations operate fake online pharmacies that may appear legitimate. Purchasing medications such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, Xanax, or Adderall from these sources has sometimes led to tragic consequences due to contamination with substances like fentanyl or methamphetamine.



Safe Signs

Your online pharmacy is likely safe if it:

- Always requires a doctor's prescription
- Provides a physical address and phone number in the US
- Has a licensed pharmacist available to answer your questions
- Is licensed with a state board of pharmacy



Warning Signs

Your online pharmacy may be unsafe if it:

- Does not require a doctor's prescription
- Is not licensed in the United States and by your state board of pharmacy
- Does not have a licensed pharmacist on staff to answer your questions
- Sends medicine that looks different than what you receive at your local pharmacy, or arrives in packaging that is broken, damaged, in a foreign language, has no expiration date, or is expired
- Offers deep discounts or prices that seem too good to be true
- Charges you for products you never ordered or received
- Does not provide clear written protections of your personal and financial information, or sells it to other websites



SAN DIEGO COUNTY
SUBSTANCE USE AND
OVERDOSE PREVENTION
TASKFORCE



Center for
Community
Research

If you suspect medication is from a fake pharmacy:

- **Stop using the medication immediately**
- **Store the medication safely** so no other people use it
- **Report the incident** to your local Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) office or online DEA: [Click Here](#)
- **Safely dispose of medication** if the DEA is not investigating the medication
 - Treatment map: [Click Here](#)
 - Safe Disposal map: [Click Here](#)

In Case of a Medical Emergency

- **Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department** if you experience any physical or health changes after taking medication from a suspicious source
- If someone is **unresponsive or not breathing**, call 911 and administer **naloxone (Narcan)** if available

Verify Before You Buy



California State
Board of Pharmacy

- **Locate a California-Licensed Online Pharmacy:**
[Click Here](#)
- **Check License in California:**
 - Search - Department of Consumer Affairs
 - The Board of Pharmacy website has a verify license link on the homepage.
[Click Here](#)



- **Locate a State-Licensed Online Pharmacy**
[Click Here](#)

Source: U.S. Food & Drug Administration. (2020). BeSafeRx: Your source for online pharmacy information. Retrieved from <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/quick-tips-buying-medicines-over-internet/besaferrx-your-source-online-pharmacy-information>

