Buying Prescription Medicine Online
A Consumer Safety Guide

The Internet has changed the way we live, work and shop. The growth of the Internet has made it possible to compare prices and buy products without ever leaving home. But when it comes to buying medicine online, it is important to be very careful. Some websites sell medicine that may not be safe to use and could put your health at risk.

It is important that website that sells medicine:
- Are U.S. state-licensed pharmacies or are certified pharmacies to distribute medication.
- Only dispense medication with a valid physician’s prescription.
- Protect your personal information.

Some medicines sold online:
- Are fake (counterfeit or “copycat” medicines).
- Are too strong or too weak.
- Have dangerous ingredients.
- Have expired (are out-of-date).
- Are not FDA-approved (haven’t been checked for safety and effectiveness).
- Are not made using safe standards.
- Are not safe to use with other medicine or products you use.
- Are not labeled, stored, or shipped correctly.

Make sure a website is a state-licensed pharmacy that is located in the United States. Pharmacies and pharmacists in the United States are licensed by a state's board of pharmacy. Your state board of pharmacy can tell you if a website is a state-licensed pharmacy, is in good standing, and is located in the United States. Find a list of state boards of pharmacy on the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) website at www.nabp.info.

A safe website should:
1. Be located in the United States and licensed by the state board of pharmacy where the website is operating
2. Have a licensed pharmacist to answer your questions
3. Require a prescription from your doctor or other health care professional who is licensed in the United States to write prescriptions for medicine
4. Have a way for you to talk to a person if you have problems

Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration