

## Buying safe, approved and effective medicines

You should only buy your medicines from a recognised and trusted source such as your local pharmacy. In Ireland, pharmacies are regulated by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI). When you buy from these pharmacies, you know that your medicine has been authorised and that the safety and quality of the medicine is being monitored by the HPRA.

## Always get expert advice

Only doctors, dentists and certain nurses can give you a prescription and you should only take prescription medicines under the care and supervision of a healthcare professional.

While the internet can be a good source of health information, it is always best to seek the right advice about any concerns or symptoms you may have. If you don't, you may not have a proper diagnosis of your problem and you could end up buying the wrong medicine for your condition. Don't put yourself at risk.

## The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA)

Our role is to protect and enhance public and animal health by regulating medicines, medical devices and other health products.

### What does the HPRA do?

As the regulatory authority, we monitor the safety and quality of medicines available in Ireland. Our aim is to make sure that medicines are as safe as possible and do what they are intended to do.

### More information

This is one in a series of information leaflets that you can get from the HPRA and from our website: [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie).



Kevin O'Malley House  
Earlsfort Centre  
Earlsfort Terrace  
Dublin 2  
Phone: (01) 676 4971  
Fax: (01) 676 7836  
E-mail: [info@hpra.ie](mailto:info@hpra.ie)

[www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie)



### HUMAN MEDICINES

## The dangers of buying prescription medicines online

Our advice



## OUR ADVICE ON

## The dangers of buying prescription medicines online

**Buying prescription medicines on the internet might seem like a good idea but there is no way of knowing how safe these medicines are or if they will work properly. At best, you could simply be wasting your money. At worst, these medicines could cause you serious harm.**

Here are some of the many reasons why you should never buy prescription-only medicines online.

### Dangers to your health

- Even if the medicine you buy online looks the same, there is no guarantee that it is genuine or that it is the same medicine that was prescribed for you. As a result, your condition may go untreated.
- There is no way of knowing if the medicine has been tested and approved for human use. What is sent to you may not even be the medicine that was advertised on the website.

**You should only buy prescription medicines from a recognised and trusted source such as your local pharmacy.**

- There is no way to be certain how or where the medicine was made. This means you cannot know if the manufacturer operates to acceptable standards of quality and hygiene.
- The medicine may not have been packaged, labelled or stored correctly and could be out-of-date. There may also be no patient information, such as how to take the medicine, or the information may simply be wrong.
- The active ingredient in a medicine is what makes it work. A medicine bought online may contain no active ingredient, too much or too little of an active ingredient, or the wrong ingredients altogether. It could be useless in treating your medical complaint.
- Some medicines bought online have been found to contain dangerous toxic substances.
- As there is no certainty about what is in the medicine you buy on the internet, you can't be sure if it is safe to use alongside medicines you may already be taking. There could be interactions with your regular medicines.

### Supplying prescription medicines online is illegal

In Ireland, it is against the law to supply prescription medicines by mail order (including through the internet). Manufacturing fake or counterfeit medicines – known as falsified medicines – is also a criminal offence. Illegal prescription medicines that are discovered by customs officials coming into the country are destroyed. There have also been prosecutions and other actions involving website operators.

We welcome any information that can help us reduce the threat to public health from medicines coming into the country illegally. We continually monitor and investigate these activities and we encourage you to contact us if you have any suspicions in this area.

#### HPRA Enforcement Section

Phone: (01) 634 3436

E-mail: [enforcement@hpra.ie](mailto:enforcement@hpra.ie)

### Other dangers you may face

Many internet sites that supply medicines hide their true identity and location to deceive people. Criminals are often behind the operation of these websites. This means that when you give your personal details, you are at risk of credit card fraud and identity theft.