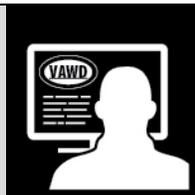


Counterfeit Drug Safety Tips for Physicians



Not sure if a medicine distributor is a legitimate distributor? Check and make sure it is licensed. If a medicine distributor offers you a price that appears to be too good to be true, it probably is. First thing to do is check what companies are listed as authorized distributors of the medication on the manufacturer's website. Only purchase medicines from licensed wholesale drug distributors. The FDA has a [webpage that has links](#) to verify by state wholesale drug distributor licenses.



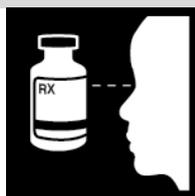
Don't be tempted by too-good-to-be-true pharmaceutical sales offers that come via fax or email to your office. Buying low cost drugs from questionable offers is a great way to end up in Federal Court. The [FDA has a webpage](#) that has links to verify by state wholesale drug distributor licenses. Check and see if the pharmaceutical wholesaler is a [Verified-Accredited Wholesale Distributor \(VAWD\)](#) by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy. Counterfeit Avastin, counterfeit Botox and counterfeit osteoporosis treatments all made their way into the secure US drug supply chain via sales offers via fax to doctors' offices and clinics. Keep fake drugs away from your patients by reporting fake drug fax offers to the FDA.



Reconsider before buying drugs online. According to the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, only 3 percent of more than 10,000 online pharmacies reviewed comply with U.S. pharmacy laws. Many rogue online pharmacies use fake "storefronts" to make people think they come from countries with high safety standards.



Not sure if an online pharmacy is legitimate? Visit [Legitscript](#) to check that it is a legitimate pharmacy. Legitscript provides a free online assessment tool for consumers to check the legitimacy of an Internet pharmacy. They do this by verifying that the website in question adheres to all applicable laws and regulations. They also provide a frequently updated list of sites to avoid, and champion efforts to take down fake online pharmacies.



Closely examine all drug packaging. Check to make sure the medication package is in English and has all the proper dosage and safety information inside. If the package is not in English, contact the manufacturer, not the distributor, to verify authenticity.



Is your patient not responding to treatment? Ask your patient where they purchase their medication. Use of counterfeit and substandard drugs can result in adverse reactions, drug interactions, or other contraindications. These effects may be mistakenly attributed to other causes, or may mask other symptoms.

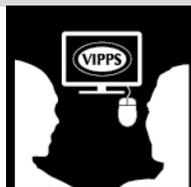


Is your patient experiencing an unexpected side effect or new symptoms? Ask your patient where they got their prescription filled. Use of counterfeit and substandard drugs can result in adverse reactions, drug interactions, or other contraindications. These effects may be mistakenly attributed to other causes, or may mask other symptoms.

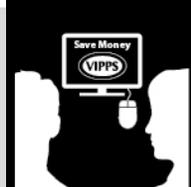
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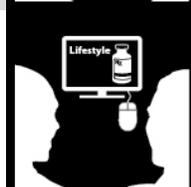
Do you know where your patient gets their prescriptions filled? Discuss the risks and benefits of buying medicines online. Safe online pharmacies always require a doctor's prescription, provide a physical address and telephone number in the United States, offer a pharmacist to answer your questions, and can produce a license with your state board of pharmacy. If it cannot be confirmed that an online pharmacy is licensed in the United States, it should not be used.



Is your patient an individual without adequate prescription coverage? They may consider buying from an online pharmacy. Discuss the risks and benefits of buying medicines online. Point them to VIPPS online pharmacies where they can safely save money, and to our handout ["Save Money Safely From Online Pharmacies."](#)



Is your patient lower-income and/or an older patient who needs long-term maintenance medicine? They may consider buying from an online pharmacy. Discuss the risks and benefits of buying medicines online. Point them to VIPPS online pharmacies where they can safely save money, and to our handout ["Save Money Safely From Online Pharmacies."](#)



Is your patient seeking lifestyle medicines? They may consider buying from an online pharmacy. Discuss the risks and benefits of buying medicines online. Point them to VIPPS online pharmacies where they can safely save money and to our handout ["Save Money Safely From Online Pharmacies."](#)



Is your patient seeking financial assistance for prescription costs for themselves or a loved one? They may consider buying from an online pharmacy. Discuss the risks and benefits of buying medicines online. Point them to VIPPS online pharmacies where they can safely save money, and to our handout ["Save Money Safely From Online Pharmacies."](#) Direct them to information on [prescription savings programs](#), such as [PPARX](#), [RX Outreach](#), [TogetherRx Access](#), and [NeedyMeds](#).



Is your patient accustomed to home delivery but has met their coverage limits? They may consider buying from an online pharmacy. Discuss your patient's options for safe purchase and delivery of their medications. Point them to VIPPS online pharmacies where they can safely save money, and to our handout ["Save Money Safely From Online Pharmacies."](#)



Ask your patients where they intend to purchase their prescription medicines. 23% of adult Internet consumers surveyed report that they have bought prescription medicine online. Be sure to educate them about the risks of purchasing online from pharmacies that aren't VIPPS approved and remind them that there are ways to [save safely while shopping online](#).



If a patient is worried about being able to afford their medical prescription, recommend that they apply for a NeedyMeds card to take advantage of their drug discount program. [NeedyMeds](#) is a non-profit program that assists patients in getting discounted medicine using a NeedyMeds card. The card cannot be used in combination with insurance, and is designed to help patients afford drugs that are not covered or have a high co-pay.

Counterfeit Drug Safety Tips for Physicians



If your patient indicates they cannot afford a medical prescription, recommend that they visit PParx.org to find out if they qualify for subsidized prescription program. The Partnership for Prescription Assistance is a non-profit service that provides qualifying patients who do not have prescription drug coverage to get their medication free or nearly free.



Tell your patient not to buy prescription drugs from a pharmacy website that does not require prescriptions! Any site that does not need a prescription is likely selling fake drugs.



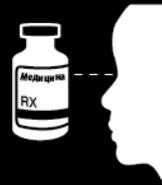
Educate patients with FDA BeSafeRx resources. Send your patients to www.FDA.gov/BeSafeRx. [FDA BeSafeRx](http://www.FDA.gov/BeSafeRx) is a public health campaign to help protect patients from fraudulent online pharmacies. The website includes warning signs of fraudulent online pharmacies and tips for buying medicine safely online. The site also has ready-to-print resources for you to share with your patients.



Educate your patients! Have them confirm that an online pharmacy is VIPPS-certified before making any purchases. Only 3% of online pharmacies comply with U.S. pharmacy laws and that many online pharmacies create fake “storefronts” to look like the drugs come from countries with high safety standards.



Does your patient intend to fill their prescriptions online? Provide package and label samples, if available, to your patient in order to establish a baseline of the medicine's characteristics. Before they take any drugs tell them to make sure and examine the packaging and compare it to the packaging and labels of known legitimate drugs.



Has your patient purchased their medication online? Have your patient pay attention to the language used on the packaging on their medication. Is it in English? Foreign language labeling is good indicator that prescription drug has not passed through US drug supply chain. All medicine approved by the FDA for sale in the United States is required to have clear labeling and instructions in English. If the label is in another language, be suspicious.



Has your patient filled their prescriptions online? Tell your patient to check the label on their prescription. Is label crooked or unclear? Does it look different than previous prescriptions of the same drug? Are the instructions in English? Does the packaging look clean and correctly sealed? When comparing packaging, Ask your patient to look for differences in paper, printing, color, and fonts (i.e. is it the same size, raised print, embossed, etc.). If they notice changes, tell them to not take the drugs, and ask them to show you the packaging.



Were your patient's drugs purchased online? Have them closely examine the appearance of the medication. Are the pills cracked or chipped? Has the pill color changed? Does it appear a shade different from earlier prescriptions? Manufacturers of both name-brand and generic drugs take great pains to produce drugs of uniform and standardized appearance. Every change to a drug's appearance must go through an approval process, so if the pills look different, they are probably fake.

Counterfeit Drug Safety Tips for Physicians



If a patient gets their drugs online, ask your patient to immediately tell you if their medication has any unexpected taste or side effects. Did they say the drug tastes different? Prescription drugs have standardized formulations that do not change over time without express FDA approval. If the drug tastes different from normal, have the patient stop taking it, and get the prescription newly filled from a legitimate pharmacy.



Ask your patient whether they are concerned about privacy regarding their medication. Tell them to buy prescription drugs only from genuine, [VIPPS-approved online pharmacies](#).



Do you think a patient has purchased counterfeit drugs? Report potentially counterfeit medications to FDA's MedWatch program by calling 1.800.332.1088.



Tell your patients that an online pharmacy that has a Canadian flag on its home page does not mean it is located in Canada. Find out where that online pharmacy is really located before buying anything from them. The Canadian flag that often appears on online drug websites is no indicator the website is based in Canada. Online pharmacies use the Canadian flag to give a false sense of security, since Canada has a reputation for low-cost prescriptions. Website addresses and images tell you almost nothing about where that "Canadian" online pharmacy is actually located. Have them confirm that the pharmacy is VIPPS certified before making any purchase.

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