

SCAMS REPORT
MILTON TOWNSHIP S.A.L.T. COUNCIL MEETING APRIL 10, 2023

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The Dangers of Online Pharmacies

Introduction: Two incentives for purchasing prescription drugs from online pharmacies are low prices and the convenience of ordering. If you decide to purchase medicines from an online pharmacy, you may not know if the pharmacy is legitimate and its medicines are safe. It is estimated that at least 95% of the world's 35,000 online pharmacies are operating illegally and are selling counterfeit and dangerous products. Forensic laboratory tests have shown that prescription medicines sold by many online pharmacies often contain too little or no active pharmaceutical ingredients (i.e., subpotent), active pharmaceutical ingredients in excess of the labeled amounts (i.e., super potent), or contaminants such as asbestos, drywall, or rat poison.

Some online pharmacies deceive customers by advertising that their medicines are "shipped from the USA." This is done deliberately to mislead consumers into thinking the medicines are United States-sourced. In fact, these medicines are manufactured in foreign countries and do not conform to FDA standards. The medicines are then shipped to distribution centers in the U.S. and ultimately to consumers.

Many online pharmacy websites appear to be legitimate but are really "fronts" for scammers trying to steal your personal and financial information. Once you provide the requested information, your identity is stolen. You will not receive the medicines you ordered.

How to find a safe online pharmacy: To determine if you should order prescription medicines from an online pharmacy, go to <https://safe.pharmacy> and enter the pharmacy's URL in the space provided. You will be informed if the pharmacy's website is verified and you can "proceed with confidence" or whether the site "has not been reviewed by NABP" (National Association of Boards of Pharmacy). If the pharmacy site is verified, the pharmacy complies with the laws and standards of the state in which it is based as well as each state to which its medicines are distributed. Of the 10,000 U.S. online pharmacy sites that have been reviewed, only about 3% are verified as compliant. Thus, 9,700 non-verified online pharmacies in the U.S. dispense medicines that potentially put patients at risk. You are advised not to obtain medicines from online pharmacies that have not been reviewed and verified by NABP.

Before ordering medicine from an online pharmacy, look for a "padlock" icon preceding the pharmacy's URL in your browser's address bar. This confirms the site is secure and encrypted and that your medical and financial information are protected. The padlock icon appears on the websites of all pharmacies that have been reviewed and verified by NABP.

Other signs you may be visiting the website of an unsafe pharmacy

- **You're able to purchase prescription medications without a valid order from a licensed practitioner.** Simply completing an online questionnaire from a "cyber doctor" without a physical examination by a licensed practitioner is often all that an online pharmacy requires for the sale of prescription medications. This is not an appropriate way to manage one's health.
- **The pharmacy is located in another country.** Pharmacies located abroad are not required to comply with FDA laws and standards. As a result, they may be distributing medicines that are not approved for human use.
- **A physical address and telephone number do not appear on the pharmacy's website.** If you don't know the pharmacy's location and telephone number, you'll have difficulty getting guidance if you experience adverse effects to a medication they sold you or don't receive a medication you ordered and paid for.

If you were the victim of an online pharmacy scam, report it to the following agencies

- Illinois Attorney General Senior Citizens Consumer Fraud Hotline (1-800-243-5377)
- U.S. Food & Drug Administration (fda.gov/safety)
- Better Business Bureau (bbb.org)
- Your local police department.

[Sources: NABP, DEA, and BBB]