

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **What is the Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies?**

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global), a non-profit organization founded in 2009, is dedicated to making the Internet safe for consumers around the world through advocacy, research, policy and education.

### **How widespread are illegal online pharmacies?**

Recent studies found that approximately 96% of online drug sellers are operating illegally, with 20 new fake websites being launched every day.

### **What percentage of medicines sold online are counterfeit?**

Research has found that 50% of the medicines sold online from sites that hide their physical address are counterfeit or substandard.

### **What are the health risks associated with buying prescription medicines online?**

Fake medicines sold online are often manufactured in unsafe or unsanitary conditions. They may contain no active ingredients, too little or too much of an active ingredient, or a completely different active ingredient than what is on the label, all of which could potentially lead to adverse reactions or death.

### **What are some of the products found to be in counterfeit medications?**

Products sold by illegal online drug sellers may contain floor wax, mercury, concrete, chalk, boric acid, road tar, paint, anti-freeze, heavy metals and other poisons. This means that patients are just a click away from products that may harm or even kill them.

### **What are the financial risks?**

In addition to the health risks, consumers who purchase prescription medications from illegal online drug sellers risk having their identity stolen by providing these criminals with credit card and other personal information.

### **Why do consumers go online for prescription medicines and what are the risks?**

As prescription drug prices continue to rise and lured by the "too good to be true" prices offered on these fake websites, consumers may end up paying a higher price than anticipated, as medications may be counterfeit, ineffective, or adulterated with other ingredients, placing them at risk for serious adverse events, hospitalizations and other potentially life-threatening issues.

### **How many people have bought prescription drugs online?**

It's estimated that one in six U.S. consumers have purchased drugs online without a valid prescription at some point. What's just as frightening is that 65% of search results for prescription drugs leads U.S. consumers to illegal and unsafe websites.

**How do we combat this problem?**

Everyone agrees that education is the key to effectively combating the problem of illegal online drug sellers and counterfeit medicines. With nearly 6 million healthcare providers in the U.S., including physicians, nurses and pharmacists, they can play a significant role in helping to educate patients about the risks associated with purchasing medications online from an unverified source and how to stay safe.

**How do patients get financial help paying for their prescriptions?**

As prescription drug prices continue to rise and insurance and Medicare covering less of the cost of these medicines, consumers can get the help they need by visiting [www.needymeds.com](http://www.needymeds.com).

**What should consumers do to stay safe?**

Consumers should visit [www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy](http://www.BuySafeRx.pharmacy) to verify whether a pharmacy website is safe and legal. They also should never buy prescription medicines from a pharmacy website that:

- (1) isn't licensed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- (2) doesn't have a physical street address in the U.S. displayed on the site;
- (3) doesn't require a valid prescription;
- (4) ships from other countries to the U.S.;
- (5) doesn't have a licensed pharmacist available for consultation;
- (6) offers too good to be true prices; or
- (7) dispenses medication simply by completing an online questionnaire