



Buying Medicines Online in the EU

The Internet is the biggest unregulated market in the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that **over** 50% of medicines purchased on the internet from sites that conceal their address may be counterfeit.

Many people are unaware that a large number of online pharmacies are not regulated and that when purchasing medicines online, there is a very high chance that these medicines are counterfeit. A report carried out by the EAASM found that 62% (EAASM report "The Counterfeiting Superhighway") of medicines bought online were either substandard or counterfeit.

What can you do to protect yourself from buying counterfeit medicines online?

1. Don't buy from sites which offer to sell you drugs without a prescription, or sell drugs which are not approved by [The European Medicines Agency \(EMA\)](#).
2. Don't buy from websites who do not have a registered pharmacist available to answer questions.
3. Check the URL of the website by typing it into: <http://www.whois.net> – is it registered in your country? It is illegal to import drugs bought from foreign sites, the risks are greater, and there is very little you can do if you get ripped off. Another tool is the <http://www.reversewhois.com> to find out how many websites each registrant owns. If the owner of the website you are investigating owns several sites and they are based in a foreign country perhaps their service is not right for you.
4. Is there a telephone number that you can ring to place your order? Does the telephone number work?
5. Does the website offer 'bulk discounts', 'sample packs', 'new cure' or 'amazing results'? If so, exercise even more caution – these offers are probably trying to trick you into purchasing from that website.
6. If the website offers an 'online consultation', be very careful. Unlicensed websites often offer this service to create a semblance of respectability and legitimacy.

Don't forget: make sure you talk to a doctor before using any medications for the first time.

Source: [European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines](#)