



Better Business Bureau Senior Awareness Initiative

Consumer Alert

Fake Online Pharmacies

With health care costs on the rise, more consumers are looking to the internet to buy prescription medications. BBB warns consumers to be cautious when ordering medications from pharmacies online. Spam emails (also known as pharm spam) offer pills for treating depression, heart disease, etc. at low prices from online pharmacies, but consumers do not get what they are looking for out of these supposed deals.

Fake pharmacies (located outside the United States) send drugs that are past their expiration, have too much or too little of the active ingredients, or have the wrong ingredients but look the same as the pills consumers are trying to buy. These pills can be dangerous to consumers, conflicting with medications they are taking or aggravating their symptoms.

Online pharmacies pose another threat to consumers: pharm spammers will sell your email address to other scam companies. They also try to break into your email address book and send spam to people whose email addresses you have stored there.

If you have received fake and/or incorrect drugs from an online pharmacy, you can contact the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) by calling (301) 443-1240. In case of an emergency, contact your physician. You can also report false claims to the Federal Trade Commission; call (877) 382-4357.

BBB offers these tips when buying medications online:

- Get an exam and talk to your doctor before trying to buy prescription medications.
- When buying prescription drugs, if the pharmacy does not require one do not buy from them.
- Make sure the pharmacy is located in the United States.
- Look up the pharmacy on National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (www.nabp.net) to make sure that they are licensed.
- Make sure you protect your email account with spam filters and antivirus software.
- If you get emails from unfamiliar companies offering deals on prescription medications, delete them immediately. Do not open them.
- Check out the company with your BBB. Call (216) 241-7678 or go to <http://www.cleveland.bbb.org>.

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