

# Consumer Alert!



## Online Pharmacies

Recently the District Attorney's Office was alerted to a large distribution of flyers to consumers from a pharmacy not located in the United States. Orders for prescriptions can be done online, by calling a toll-free number or through the U.S. Mail. The drugs will be shipped from a variety of foreign countries. Consumers should know the source of their prescriptions to make sure what they are buying is safe. Some medicines bought may be fake; may have dangerous ingredients; may not have been checked for safety and effectiveness; or may be labeled, stored, or shipped incorrectly.

Consumers need to make sure the company they are dealing with is a state-licensed pharmacy. Pharmacies and pharmacists in the United States are licensed by a state board of pharmacy. The state board of pharmacy can tell you if the pharmacy or website is a state-licensed pharmacy in good standing and is located in the United States. Consumers can find a list of state boards of pharmacy on the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) website at [www.nabp.info](http://www.nabp.info).

The Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies (DORA), Division of Professions and Occupation, Board of Pharmacy regulates licensure in Colorado. Visit DORA's website at [www.dora.colorado.gov](http://www.dora.colorado.gov) to check licensure.

Warning signs of online pharmacies:

- Offer discounts or cheap prices that seem too good to be true.
- Allow you to buy drugs without a prescription or completing an online questionnaire.
- Drugs are not FDA approved.
- Will ship prescription drugs worldwide.

- State that the drugs will be shipped from a foreign country.
- Are located outside of the United States.
- Are not licensed by a state board of pharmacy in the United States.

Tips to identify if pharmacy is safe:

- Require a valid prescription.
- Provides a physical address in the United States.
- Is licensed by the state board of pharmacy in your state and the state where the pharmacy is operating.
- Has a state-licensed pharmacist to answer your questions.

According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), only three percent of online pharmacies reviewed by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy are in compliance with U.S. pharmacy laws and practice standards. It is not easy to identify fake online pharmacies. Fraudulent sellers exploit U.S. consumers by pretending to be legitimate pharmacies offering prescription medicines for sale. Consumers can get information about buying prescription medicines on the FDA's website at [www.FDA.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou](http://www.FDA.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou).

Criminally prosecuting this type of crime is a challenge. If you become a victim of fraud, file a report with your local law enforcement agency. Complaints can also be filed with the Colorado State Board of Pharmacy at [www.dora.state.co.us/pharmacy](http://www.dora.state.co.us/pharmacy) or 303-894-7800.

Additionally, when the scam involves the internet, you can file a complaint with the Internet Crime Complaint Center at [www.IC3.gov](http://www.IC3.gov) or with the Federal Trade Commission at [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).

The District Attorney's Consumer Protection Line provides assistance to victims of crime and answers questions on white collar crime issues. If you have a question or need assistance, call 720-874-8547.