

BE AWARE

You can help keep medicines safe

In order to identify counterfeit medicines, you need to be attentive to the following:

1. WHERE you buy medicine. It is important to buy medicine from a known and reliable source, such as a registered pharmacy. Be especially cautious if you decide to purchase medicines over the Internet.

2. WHAT you should look out for when you buy medicines. Check the packaging, the product and the patient leaflet when you purchase medicine. Also, check the expiry date.

3. HOW the medicine is expected to take effect. Ask your health professional what is supposed to happen when you take your medicine. Tell your health professional if you identify anything unusual.

4. WHEN the first improvements in your condition should be experienced. If you know, for example, that a medicine is supposed to start relieving symptoms within 24 hours and it does not take effect within this time, you should notify their health professional.

If in doubt, please consult your health professional as soon as possible.

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International Alliance of Patients'
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International Alliance of
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A global voice for patients



The World Health Professions Alliance (WHPA)

The World Health Professions Alliance brings together the International Council of Nurses, the International Pharmaceutical Federation, the World Dental Federation and the World Medical Association and speaks on behalf of more than 25 million health care professionals worldwide. Dentists, nurses, pharmacists and physicians are key players in the health team - delivering health care to individuals, families and communities regardless of their colour, creed, gender, religion or political affiliation. The WHPA aims to facilitate collaboration between the health professions and major international stakeholders such as governments, policy makers, and the World Health Organization. By working in collaboration, instead of along parallel tracks, the patient and health care system benefit.

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This leaflet is intended for the use of consumers.
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If you are buying or using medicines, please be aware that there are counterfeit medicines that may threaten your health and those of your loved ones.

What is the extent of the problem?

The incidence of counterfeit lifestyle and life-saving medicines is increasing worldwide. Counterfeit medicines are not made according to established standards of safety, quality and efficacy. They are deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source.

Counterfeiting can apply to both brand name and generic products. Counterfeit medicines may include products with the correct ingredients but fake packaging, with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients or with insufficient active ingredients.

While there are actions being taken against counterfeit medicines, there is still a threat. And the response to this threat is insufficient, especially in developing countries. But, from now on, you and your family can help keep yourself and other patients safe.



You can help keep medicines safe

You can reduce your chances of taking a counterfeit medicine by buying your medicines only from known and reliable sources with appropriately trained staff, such as qualified pharmacists. This means that you know the name, address and owner of the place where you bought your medicine and that the licence number of the outlet can be checked by the relevant national authorities.

There are a few key steps that you can use to identify counterfeit medicines. If you do suspect a medicine is counterfeit, tell your health care professionals about it. Show them the medicine. This will help keep medicines safe.

Counterfeit medicines can cause serious harm or death to innocent patients. Some medicines are diluted and insufficiently dosed by criminals. Such practices are a threat to public health as they lower the efficiency of the medicine. Patients may not get better, may get worse and may have complications due to counterfeit medicines.

Counterfeiters seek huge profits and harm innocent people. To increase their profits, they often choose to counterfeit medicines that are either expensive or widely distributed.

This is why everyone should work together to stop counterfeit medicines. If you buy your medicines from known and reliable sources, from qualified personnel, and if you are working together with your health professional, you can identify and report counterfeit medicines to improve your safety and that of your family and friends.

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Be observant and carefully inspect the packaging, the product and the information leaflet. Check the product's appearance against your usual medicine. Check the expiry dates and any other information on the packaging or on the leaflet inside. If there is anything unusual or different about the medicine, tell your health care professional, especially if you have bought your medicine from an unauthorized, unreliable or unknown source.

Evaluate your response to the medicine you are using. If your medicine has an unexpected effect or no effect at all, consider counterfeit medicine as a possible suspect.

Acknowledge to your health professional where you bought the medicine and what effects it had on you. Tell the full story so that the health professional can help you and others.

Where did you get your medicine? Tell your health professional where it was bought, particularly if it was not from a known and reliable source, such as a market, over the internet, or from an individual on the street.

Actively inform your health professional and other patients who might also have received the medicines about your experience to help keep others safe.

Remove any suspect medicine from your home, and take all the medicine - and its packaging - to your health professional so that it can be reported to the relevant authorities.

Educate your friends and family about the risk of fake medicines.