



# Risks of buying medicines online

**There are significant risks associated with the growth of the internet medicine market, which is largely made up of overseas websites.**

Medicines are different to other consumer products you may purchase over the internet. They have the potential to cause serious side effects and health problems if not used and stored properly. There are risks whenever different types of medicines are mixed together, and risks that the medicine may not suit you. It's important that you seek advice from your doctor or pharmacist before you consider taking any medicine, whether it is a complementary, over-the-counter or prescription medicine.

Buying medicines over the internet can pose a serious risk to your health. If you intend to buy medicines online, it is worth considering a few important issues.

**Quality:** A concern with overseas medicine internet sites is that the quality of the medicines you purchase cannot be guaranteed. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has rigorous regulations in place for the sale of medicines in Australia. These regulations guarantee that medicines sold in Australia meet stringent standards regarding consistency, potency and safety. Operators of internet sites selling medications are often based in countries where medicine regulations are not as strict. By purchasing a medication over the internet, you place yourself at risk of purchasing counterfeit or fake medicines (which may not have the correct ingredients or may not be the correct strength) and medicines that do not meet strict manufacturing and quality guidelines.

**Safety:** Buying medicines online without advice from a qualified healthcare professional puts your health at risk. If you buy medicines online you don't have the opportunity to seek more information (such as advice on how to take them, or what medicines to be careful of using with them).



Furthermore, they may cause unpleasant or dangerous side effects and you may not be able to contact the company to discuss these problems. Medications that are of poor quality may also pose a danger to your health as they may contain remnants of toxic compounds.

**PBS Safety Net:** If you buy your medicines online, they will not contribute towards your PBS Safety Net, which means that you could be wasting your money. The PBS gives all Australian residents (and eligible overseas visitors) access to affordable prescription medicine that is subsidised by the Australian Government. If you or your family need a lot of medicine in a calendar year, the PBS Safety Net helps you with the cost of your medicines. Once you or your family have spent a certain amount on prescription medicines, you will reach the Safety Net threshold. This means you can apply for a PBS Safety Net card and your PBS medicine will be less expensive, or free, until 31 December that year.

Your health is too important to take risks with. Ask your pharmacist for free and quality-assured health and medicine advice.

*For further information contact:*

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