



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SAHPRA**  
**South African**  
**Health Products**  
**Regulatory Authority**

To: Editors and health journalists  
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### **Medicines safety communication** **Public warned to avoid online purchases of medicine**

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) is aware that some members of the public are purchasing prescription medicines on the Internet. Buying prescribed medicines online is illegal in South Africa.

Medicines are marketed and made available to the public through pharmacies throughout South Africa, including online pharmacies. However, some online pharmacies are not registered as per the requirements of the Pharmacy Act, 1974 (Act 53 of 1974) and may be run by individuals who put financial gains above patient safety. They knowingly and unlawfully distribute prescription and non-prescription medicines, including counterfeit medicines and illicit drugs. Therefore, buying medicines from them may potentially be unsafe. This easy and illegal availability of prescription medicines promotes the misuse and abuse of medicines.

SAHPRA cannot assure the public of the safety, effectiveness or quality of medicines sold via the Internet. People who buy prescription medicines from online pharmacies that are not registered put their health at risk because there is no guarantee that they are not counterfeit, contaminated, expired or otherwise unsafe.

SAHPRA wishes to warn consumers to be mindful of the personal health risks associated with the use of the Internet to access medicines and recommends that this be avoided. It is advised that medicines should only be taken under the supervision of a health professional as their face-to-face guidance is crucial to the safe use of medicines.

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