

# Consumer Corner

## Mousepad To Mailbox: What Consumers Should Know About Buying Prescriptions Online

(NAPSA)—While the popularity of online pharmacy is growing, so too is the number of illegitimate sites selling prescription medication. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates there are roughly 400 vendors selling prescription drugs through thousands of Web sites. However, it is estimated that half of these vendors are based outside of the United States and may not meet state and federal requirements for selling prescription drugs online.

A licensed online pharmacy offers consumers many advantages, including convenience and cost savings. An illegal or unlicensed online pharmacy, on the other hand, may not abide by the same procedures a licensed pharmacy uses to protect consumers. As a result, these rogue sites can endanger one's health by delivering the wrong product, an incorrect dose, a product that has been tampered with, a counterfeit product or even no product at all.

"Online pharmacy empowers consumers to conveniently and effectively manage their prescription healthcare," says Dr. Glen Stettin, physician and vice president, clinical products, Medco Health Solutions, Inc., which operates one of the nation's leading online pharmacies. "But with the proliferation of illegitimate online pharmacies, consumers need to know what to look out for when buying prescription drugs online."

Dr. Stettin offers the following tips to help consumers safely purchase prescription drugs online:

- Check that the Web site has a Verified Internet Pharmacy



**When using an online pharmacy, be sure to find out if it follows safe practices and guidelines.**

Practice Sites (VIPPS) seal. Sites with the VIPPS seal have successfully completed a rigorous review and inspection by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP). You can check with your state board of pharmacy or the NABP ([www.nabp.net](http://www.nabp.net)) to verify that an online pharmacy is legitimate.

- Only purchase prescription drugs from Web sites that require a prescription from your doctor. Avoid sites that provide prescriptions by simply filling out a questionnaire.

- Avoid sites that do not provide a U.S. address and phone number to contact if there's a problem.

- Check your health plan to see if your Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM) offers an online pharmacy service. An online pharmacy offered by your PBM, such as [medcohealth.com](http://medcohealth.com), provides a convenient, safe and affordable way to order prescription drugs.