

HEALTH ALERT!

Five Myths About Drug Imports

(NAPSA)—Drug importation is often seen as a possible solution to increase access to medicine. However, many people don't know that importing medicine has some significant safety tradeoffs that may outweigh the benefits.

Myth: Drugs coming through Canada are just as safe as U.S. medicine.

Fact: Many medications purchased through Canada are not from Canada—they come from less reliable places. The Canadian government has explicitly stated that it does not inspect prescription drugs passing through Canada on their way to the United States. That means that dealers getting drugs from unapproved, unregulated and unsafe sources can easily use Canada as a pass-through for counterfeit medicines.

Myth: Importing drugs can save money.

Fact: It is true that some prescription drugs can be found at less cost from foreign sources, but they can have a much higher cost to your health. What is not widely appreciated is that these prescription drugs circumvent inspection, safe handling, labeling and other U.S. safety requirements.

Myth: It's the same medicine, no matter where it comes from.

Fact: Often it is not the same medicine. It can be an imitation manufactured under far less rigorous conditions than here in the United States, so the medicine may not have the consistency of purity or strength you rely on as a patient. At worst, it is a completely different chemical sold to you by someone out for a quick buck.



Buying medicine from outside the U.S. is risky business.

Myth: Congress wouldn't allow it if it weren't safe.

Fact: It has become politically popular over the past several years to propose prescription drug importation as a quick-fix solution for the rising cost of health care. Increasing access to all health care resources is an important goal, but the debate over prescription drug importation is permeated by myths that cloud the major safety challenges that importation would cause.

Myth: There's nothing I can do about importation of counterfeit drugs anyway.

Fact: First, for peace of mind, you should always get your prescriptions filled at a U.S. state-licensed pharmacy. If you determine or suspect any drugs of being fake, you should alert your doctor or pharmacist, who can call the Food and Drug Administration Medwatch program at 1-800-FDA-1088.

For more information about keeping our prescription medicine supply safe, visit www.safemedi.cines.org.