

Buying Antibiotics Online: What You Need to Know

(NAPSA)—The recent reports of anthrax exposure have spawned numerous Web sites and e-mails selling Ciprofloxacin (Cipro) and other antibiotics for treatment. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) warns that fraudsters often follow the headlines, tailoring their offers to prey on consumers' fears and vulnerabilities.

If you're wondering whether to buy products online from sellers who claim that their products will protect you from biological threats, the FTC, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), have news for you:

Talk to your health-care professional before you use any medications. Unless you are specifically notified or instructed by public health officials, there is no need to obtain or take antibiotics to prevent anthrax. Confirming an infection requires a doctor's examination and diagnosis. This is particularly important for anthrax.

Know that some Web sites may sell ineffective drugs.

Some sites may claim to sell FDA-approved drugs, like Cipro, made to meet U.S. standards. But they may be selling a similar drug made elsewhere, where there may be no guarantee of appropriate manufacturing standards. There also may be no way for you to tell whether a drug is an ineffective "knock-off" just by looking at the pills. In fact, the drugs could be counterfeit or even adulterated



What can you do about the anthrax scare? The U.S. government offers some advice.

with dangerous contaminants.

Know from whom you're buying.

Since it is easy to fake e-mail addresses, be mindful of who you're buying a product from. You may send the Web site your money and not get the real thing—or anything—in return. To ensure that the site is reputable and licensed to sell drugs in the United States, FDA recommends that you check with National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, www.nabp.net, (847) 698-6227, to determine whether a Web site is a licensed pharmacy in good standing.

For more tips about buying medicines online, visit www.consumer.gov or www.fda.gov/cder/drug/consumer/buyonline/guide.htm. For more information from the federal government about treatment for anthrax, visit <http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/infopage/cipro/>.