

# PRESS RELEASE



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**Subject:** Buying lifestyle drugs over the Internet

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## Safety warning on Internet drugs

Thousands of men in the UK buy "lifestyle drugs" such as erectile dysfunction medication, weight and hair loss products from websites and are oblivious to the fact that some (not all) of the websites belong to unscrupulous vendors. Many of these vendors sell medicines not licensed for sale in the UK and some sell counterfeit drugs that are harmful and in some cases can be life threatening.

These treatments are prescription only medicines (POMs) and can only be supplied to the public by a pharmacist on production of a prescription signed by a UK registered doctor. The sale and supply of medicines in the UK is controlled by the Medicines Act 1968, Section 58 (2) (a) "no person shall sell by retail, or supply in circumstances corresponding to retail sale, a medicinal product of a description, or falling within a class, specified in an order under this section (i.e. the Prescription Only Medicines Order) except in accordance with a prescription given by an appropriate practitioner..."

Legal controls of medicines are in place in the European Union to safeguard the health of the public and ensure the suitability of products for public consumption. In the UK, certain medicines are categorised "prescription only" due to their potent nature and therefore they can only be safely used under the care and supervision of suitably qualified healthcare professionals.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has concerns about the availability of medicines over the Internet, particularly prescription only medicines. This is because in many cases the people that offer POMs for sale over the Internet are not qualified healthcare professionals. Members of the public risk being supplied with medicines that are not safe or suitable for them.

Consumers who are concerned as to whether or not a particular website is bonafide, can always contact the MHRA on 020 7084 2000. The main aim of the MHRA is to safeguard public health by: ensuring that medicines for human use, sold or supplied in the UK, are of an acceptable standard of safety, quality and efficacy.

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### Notes to Editor

1. In Great Britain, bona fide internet pharmacies must be operated from pharmacy premises that are registered with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB). Registered pharmacy websites are required to clearly display the name and owner of the pharmacy business and the address of the pharmacy. These details can be checked against the RPSGB on-line register at [www.rpsgb.org/registration](http://www.rpsgb.org/registration).
2. This release is issued as part of MHRA's campaign to educate the public on issues associated with the purchase of medicinal drugs on the internet. The information is targeted to specific segments of the population to assist consumers to make informed decisions about their health.

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