

Over-the-Internet (OTI) Healing



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Access to over-the-Internet (OTI) medications has a profound impact on health and healing. Our nation has become Internet savvy, and access to OTI medications plays a significant role in self-care.

OTI medications offer patients flexibility and convenience, and the ability to use their own initiative to prevent and treat ailments that often do not require professional consultation. Most OTI medications can be quite helpful, especially to individuals who reside in rural or remote areas where access to immediate health care is lacking. However, there also are serious threats to patients who obtain OTI medications because of the risk of potentially harmful adverse reactions and fraudulent illegal on-line pharmacies. Therefore, patients need to be educated so they can become vigilant to emerging threats and health risks posed by the Internet.

CAUTION AND SAFETY OF OTI MEDICATIONS

Many patients are oblivious to the dangers and serious life-threatening reactions that may develop from consuming OTI medications. As a result, patients must be urged to use OTI medications with similar precautionary measures as with the use of prescription drugs. Some of the most important recommendations with the use of OTI medications are:

- Pay close attention to labels;
- Consume only OTI medications indicated for symptoms;
- Use medications as directed, avoiding the combination of OTI medications with other prescription drugs; and
- Discard OTI medications that have expired.

According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), OTI medications can have both positive and negative impacts on patients' health. The FDA explains that non-prescription OTI medications are safe and effective when used appropriately. Moreover, the use of OTI medications offers multiple opportunities to treat aches, combat illness, and promote success in healing.

OTI medications can also impact patients negatively, especially if accurate usage or dosage is not appropriately followed. Drug interaction is also a significant factor with all medications, but OTI drug interactions are usually mild and fairly uncommon. However, in some cases OTI medication can produce undesirable results or reduce the effectiveness of other medications, as well as interact with foods, or chronic health conditions such as hypertension and diabetes.

IDENTIFYING PROBLEM WEBSITES

Warnings from the FDA about the dangers of purchasing OTI medications have led to the identification of multiple unsafe websites. It can be difficult to detect untrustworthy websites, and the most problematic are ones with unsafe or illegal practices. Websites suspicious for fraud often meet the following criteria:

- They offer OTI drugs at dramatically lower prices than the competition;
- They offer prescription drugs without a prescription, and don't protect patients' personal information;
- They sell drugs without origin or quality, sell incorrect drugs or dangerous products, and provide no contact information or telephone number.

In addition, the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) reported that only three percent of on-line websites were identified to be federally approved. Multiple fraudulent retailers have developed credible and legitimate

appearing websites so that even well-informed consumers may be fooled.

To further inform consumers about illegal websites, the FDA provides information through their BeSafeRx campaign, which assists patients in avoiding risks and purchasing OTI medications safely online. **llh**

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