I’m considering buying prescription drugs from Canada. Is this legal? How do I know what I’m getting?

July 16, 2019 By Lucinda K. Porter RN

It is legal to bring back a 90-day personal supply of medication from a foreign country, assuming that the medication is approved for use in the United States and you have a valid prescription or doctor’s note. The medication must be in its original container. Controlled substances, such as opioids, benzodiazepines, etc., can be brought into the country only in quantities of 50 dosage units or less.

Technically, having medications shipped to you is illegal in most cases. However, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does make exceptions to this, particularly in cases of serious illness for which there are no effective treatments in the United States. Click here to read the FDA’s Personal Importation Policy.

As for knowing what you are getting, buying medicine on the internet from any source can be risky; before you do that, read the FDA’s BeSafeRx tips. When buying from Canada, you can trust drugs that are certified by the Canadian International Pharmacy Association. However, before obtaining medication from another country, click here to explore ways to lower medication costs at home, such as prescription assistance programs and other options.

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