



# FDA: Beware Fake Cures on the Internet

Your grandparents may tell you stories of a shady salesman who came knocking at their door selling “snake oil” containing a “miracle ingredient” that would cure a family member’s malady. To protect Americans from these quacks and con artists, the United States government, in 1906, created the Food and Drug Administration in order to ensure the safety of your medicine and prohibit exaggerated marketing or questionable medicines.

My Take on this is that today, instead of knocking at your front door, the quacks and con artists now use the Internet – and so we still need a strong but a modern day FDA to protect you and your family from fraudulent claims and fake “cures.” For FDA to deal with products that can be purchased directly on the Internet and

shipped from anywhere in the world directly to your home is a daunting challenge.

This week I visited our FDA mail facilities at the JFK airport in New York and witnessed FDA inspectors working together with Customs and Border Protection agents intercepting shipments of counterfeit, adulterated and illegal drugs. They also work with a network of FDA laboratories to analyze products for dangerous substances. FDA criminal investigators gather such evidence to seek criminal prosecution against those who exploit your need for medicines.

Furthermore, we are monitoring the Internet to find these modern day “snake oil” salespeople. Last week, the FDA took action against 23 U.S. companies and two foreign individuals marketing a wide range of products over the Internet fraudulently claiming to prevent and cure cancer. We also warned consumers against

purchasing or using products including tablets, teas, tonics, black salves, and creams – all sold under various names on the new frontier – the Internet.

Protecting your health is a team effort by FDA with our federal partners. But this team effort also involves you – you must be vigilant. When buying products on the Internet, be certain you are dealing with legitimate products from legitimate sources, such as those that carry the Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites or VIPPS seal of approval. The Internet is an important benefit of life in the 21st century. FDA will continuously do its part to use modern information technologies, sophisticated detection tools and rapid analytical methods to protect your health – but buyer beware. [FDA](#)

*Andy*

Andrew C. von Eschenbach, M.D.  
Commissioner of Food and Drugs