Remote and online provision of medicines: Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)7 at a glance



Practical guidance for governments, regulators, healthcare professionals and service providers to help ensure the safe, equitable and well-regulated provision of medicines through remote and online channels

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What is this recommendation about?

This is a legal instrument that lays out how medicines can be provided safely and fairly through remote and online channels. This ensures that everyone, no matter where or how they get their medicines, receives the same quality of care and protections as they would during an in-person visit or consultation.

Background

Drafted by a working group composed of experts co-ordinated by the three intergovernmental committees operating under the European Committee on Pharmaceuticals and Pharmaceutical Care (CD-P-PH, EDQM/Council of Europe), Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)7 on best practices for the remote and online provision of medicines draws on consultations with regulatory authorities and a broad range of public and professional stakeholders. It was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 29 April 2026.



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Goals

This recommendation recognises the benefits of remote and online provision of medicines but highlights the need to ensure that such services are delivered safely and appropriately, alongside measures to minimise risks to individuals and public health. Moreover, it reaffirms the importance of developing comprehensive policy and regulatory frameworks and stresses the need for co-operation and co-ordination – across national borders where necessary – among all relevant authorities and all professionals involved. Ultimately, the aim of this recommendation is to protect public health by promoting the key points listed below.



Quality of care when receiving medicines

Making sure people can get the medicines they need via remote and online channels, without compromising quality of care, safety or equity.

Equivalent benefits and protections for everyone

Setting clear and comprehensive standards for everyone involved in the remote and online supply of medicines.

Close co-operation and collaboration between all relevant authorities throughout the entire medicines-provision process

Encouraging authorities within and between countries to work together, so that rules are comprehensive and consistent and people everywhere are protected across borders.

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Main principles

Certain general principles apply to everyone using, developing or regulating a system for the remote or online provision of medicines.



Regulations apply to all medicines

Medicines provided online, whether prescription or non-prescription, are still part of a process of care; online channels should not be used to bypass relevant safeguards or regulations.



Services should maximise the benefits and minimise the risks for everyone

Remote and online services should be just as safe, equitable and well-regulated as face-to-face ones and offer equivalent benefits.



Equity and digital inclusion should be built-in

Nobody should be left behind, especially not older adults, children, people with low digital and health literacy or those with disabilities.



Alternatives should be offered

Remote and online provision of medicines is not appropriate for everyone, or suitable for all conditions or for all medicines.



Services should be clear and transparent

Patients should be able to get all necessary information about medicines through remote and online services, and to ask questions or seek redress.



Only authorised providers can supply medicines

Only pharmacies and other authorised outlets may legally provide medicines online or remotely, and it should be easy to verify their status.



Online does not mean authorised

Individuals operating on online or social media marketplace platforms are not authorised to provide medicines.



Online services must ensure cyber security and data protection

All online platforms involved in providing medicines must ensure that their digital infrastructure is fit-for-purpose and safe to use; data protection regulations must be observed.

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Who does what?

Many different professionals work to protect public health in general. Knowing who does what, whom to speak with and what questions to ask can help to enhance co-operation and transparency.



Patients should …

- seek medicines from qualified professionals and verified providers;
- expect to receive expert advice and full information about the medicines they need;
- report unauthorised people attempting to sell medicines, online or elsewhere.



Authorised pharmacies & outlets must …

- ensure a high standard of care and personalised advice;
- meet strict safety, quality and data-protection standards;
- only provide medicines authorised by law and ensure their safe delivery.



Online marketplaces and social media platforms should ...

- keep up-to-date on the additional rules that apply to the provision of medicines;
- prevent the sale of unauthorised medicines;
- work closely with regulators to monitor such activities.



Healthcare providers (e.g. doctors, pharmacists) should …

- determine whether remote and online provision of medicines is appropriate, assess needs, give adequate information and advice and provide follow-up care;
- work together to keep patients safe and to maintain continuity of care;
- keep informed about the differences between countries regarding the regulatory status of medicines and of the online provision of medicines.



Healthcare professional bodies should …

- adopt and update guidance and codes of conduct for safe online and remote practices;
- collaborate with other authorities to provide training for healthcare professionals;
- have the authority and power to investigate and address problems;
- advocate for vulnerable populations.



Government and/or national health authorities should …

- oversee and strengthen the relevant regulatory and legal framework;
- make sure all forms of online provision are well-regulated, relevant competent authorities and their roles are identified and known to each other and co-operation is established;
- ensure competent authorities are properly resourced.

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Safeguarding our public health systems

Public health is everyone's business. Here are the key recommendations for a strong remote and online supply of medicines.



Ensure fairness and inclusion

by making sure all groups, including the most vulnerable, have equal access.



Keep legislation and regulations up-to-date and strong

so they evolve to keep pace with digital health trends and prevent evasion of safeguards.



Establish robust identification and verification

for providers.



Educate the public

about safe use of remote and online services and how to identify legitimate providers.



Foster collaboration

between all authorities and health professionals.



Make cross-border co-operation

part of routine oversight to ensure rules are respected on both sides.



Require clear information

on medicines and processes for complaints.

Cross-border aspects

Nowadays, international purchases of all sorts – including of medicines – are commonplace. This has real benefits for patients, such as better access to treatment. But because medicines are not simple consumer products, their provision across borders requires additional safeguards.

International co-operation and standards

Countries must work together to ensure the same high standards apply wherever patients buy their medicines.

Data sharing and traceability

Authorities should facilitate secure data sharing to enable tracking of medicines and rapid action when problems are detected.

Awareness for all

Patients must be educated about the risks, rules and limitations of cross-border purchases. Professionals must respect the rules in patients' home countries when providing medicines for export.

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Keep in mind

Staying informed is vital to staying healthy.
Here are a few tips for patients to consider.



Not all websites are safe

Use only official, authorised pharmacies and outlets. Easy-to-spot verification should be available.

Check contact details

When buying online, check the physical address, e-mail address and links to competent authorities with oversight.

Personal data safety matters

Always check how personal information is used and protected.

Report problems

Patients have a right to redress and should report any problems to national competent authorities.

Remote is not always best

Some conditions or medicines are not suitable for remote or online processes. In case of doubt, patients should consult their community pharmacy.

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The **European Committee on Pharmaceuticals and Pharmaceutical Care** (CD-P-PH) is an intergovernmental steering committee of the Council of Europe. Its core mission is to help make the medication process safer, more responsible and accessible to all who need it. It does this by supporting national competent authorities of the Council of Europe member states that have ratified the Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia (the European Pharmacopoeia Convention).

The CD-P-PH oversees the development of legal instruments, policies and guidance documents and exercises general oversight over the activities of the European Pharmacopoeia Commission. Its activities focus on four main areas: preventing falsified medical products; classifying medicines as prescription and non-prescription products; promoting the safe and appropriate use of medicines in hospital and ambulatory care settings; and addressing issues related to borderline products. As a steering committee, the CD-P-PH enacts its mission primarily through the oversight and co-ordination of three subordinate committees of experts and the Borderline Products Network, each dedicated to one of these focus areas.

The **European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare** (EDQM), part of the Council of Europe, strives to achieve better health for all through the synergistic contributions of its member and observer states and its extensive network of experts and other stakeholders, ranging from industry to healthcare professionals and donor/patient associations. It is active in four major policy areas: medicines, pharmaceutical care, substances of human origin and consumer health. The EDQM's origins can be found in the European Pharmacopoeia Convention, opened for signature in 1964. Today, 39 Council of Europe member states have ratified the convention and more than 30 countries from all over the world participate in the EDQM's activities as observers.

The **Council of Europe i**s the continent's leading human rights organisation. Its mission is to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law continent-wide. Since its foundation in 1949, the Organisation has created a common legal space, centred on the European Convention on Human Rights. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 46 member states representing over 700 million citizens.

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Let's talk...

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