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## **COVID-19: How to protect yourself from falsified medical products?**

Strasbourg, 08.04.2020 – At a time when the Covid-19 epidemic is posing unprecedented challenges to the health sector, the Council of Europe calls on governments to be extremely vigilant against counterfeit or falsified medicines and medical products. Faced with this threat, states can rely on the MEDICRIME Convention to safeguard public health and target the criminal behaviour of those who, like criminal networks, take advantage of the loopholes in our systems and of the current crisis.

In an [opinion](#) published today, the MEDICRIME Committee warns of the increased risk, in these times of shortage, of the sale of falsified medical products: medicines, medical devices, protective masks and rapid screening tests, which may prove ineffective or dangerous for those who use them.

It also makes a number of recommendations:

- Online platforms offering medical products to the public health system or to individuals should be monitored, and States should work together to break the supply chain of falsified medical products that are traded between their territories;
- Staff should be assigned to hot spots to detect and stop the trafficking of falsified medical products;
- In order to prevent criminals from exploiting shortages, measures must be taken to prevent the unauthorised diversion of essential medical products from State health systems and supply channels;
- Close cooperation between national agencies and services is necessary to ensure that measures to prevent falsified medical products from entering the health services do not affect the legitimate supply of medical products needed by beneficiaries. Similarly, health professionals and health services must ensure that they do not obtain medical products from unverified sources;
- National and international cooperation must be intensified to gather evidence of the criminal nature of medical product-related offences committed during the pandemic;
- The rights of victims, including the right to be informed of the effects of falsified medical products on their health, must be guaranteed.

### **Read more on this topic:**

The Convention on the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health of 2011 ("[MEDICRIME Convention](#)"), the only international treaty on the subject, has been ratified by 16 countries and signed by 16 others in Europe and beyond.

The Convention establishes a framework for national and international cooperation between the competent national and international health, police and customs authorities, the adoption of measures to prevent crime with the involvement of the private sector, the effective prosecution of offenders and the protection of victims and witnesses.

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