

TIPS FOR CONSUMERS

RECOGNISING COUNTERFEITS OCTOBER 2009

1. Why the caution about buying counterfeit goods?

- The counterfeiting industry is part of organised crime. By purchasing counterfeit goods, you are supporting criminal acts.
- Counterfeiters do not conform to health and safety or quality standards in order to be able to manufacture the goods as cheaply as possible. This is at your expense. When you buy a counterfeit - particularly medication, toys or tools - you are endangering your health and your life.
- Counterfeiters cannot be held accountable for guarantee or liability claims because their whereabouts are unknown.
- In some surrounding countries, such as France and Italy, the purchase of counterfeit goods is punished with heavy fines or imprisonment. When entering Switzerland, counterfeit goods can be confiscated by customs without compensation.

2. How can I protect myself from counterfeits?

You can recognise counterfeits by taking note of the following:

- Price: Is there a realistic price difference in comparison to the original product? Supposed 'bargains' often turn out to be counterfeits. However, an expensive price alone is no guarantee for authenticity. In fact, brazen vendors try to disguise their counterfeit goods in this way.
- Place of sale: Original products are rarely sold at the beach or at markets.
- Sales strategy: be sceptical if you are given a confusing explanation for the cheap price, the reason for selling, the available quantities for sale, etc.
- Packaging: original products are not sold in damaged cheap packaging with a smudged label. Counterfeiters do not usually conform to labelling requirements such as place of manufacture, composition, importer, etc.
- Labelling: packaging, labels or instruction leaflets with spelling or grammatical mistakes indicate that the product is a counterfeit.
- Missing product enclosures: if guarantees, certificates and directions for use are missing, be careful. However, such product enclosures and quality labels are no guarantee for authenticity; even these are being forged more frequently too.
- Quality: if the zip already falls apart when used for the first time or if the stitches have come undone, then it is probably a fake.
- According to data published by customs, particular care should be taken with the following types of products: accessories such as handbags, luggage, sunglasses, etc., clothing, sportswear, shoes, medication, watches, jewellery, electronic equipment, perfumes, cosmetics, food products, software, CDs, DVDs, games and cigarettes.

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Recognising counterfeits online:

- Poor picture quality: if the item for sale is depicted using blurred photos, something is probably being concealed - usually the poor quality of the counterfeit product.
- Unlicensed original pictures: vendors often use the visual material of the original manufacturer without their permission and then send counterfeits. Check the source of the pictures by carrying out an image search using the product name.
- Suspicious product description: if a product is advertised as a "copy", "imitation", "replica" or "look-alike", then this is a clear case of counterfeiting. Caution is urged with designations such as "imported goods", "in the style of", "type", and "similar to". If the vendor states that he cannot guarantee the authenticity of the product or that minor discrepancies are possible, then it is advisable not to purchase the product.
- Dubious reputation of the vendor: critically read through vendor reviews on online platforms, particularly the negative and neutral ones, for clues as to whether you are dealing with a counterfeiter. Search for the name of the vendor on the internet. Be aware that lots of good reviews are no guarantee for authenticity as many people do not care if they receive a fake product.
- Origin of the goods: ask the dealer where the product comes from. In the case of counterfeits, this is usually not from the dealer's place of business. Fake accessories and clothes usually come from China, Hong Kong or Turkey, and counterfeit medication usually from India.
- Certain product groups such as medication and new luxury watches are, as a rule, sold through official sales outlets and not on the internet.

You can find useful links at www.konsum.ch/links (site available in German only).

This leaflet has been produced by

STOP PIRACY

in cooperation with kf



STOP PIRACY, the Swiss platform against counterfeiting and piracy, is a common initiative between Swiss commerce and the Swiss administration, to which kf also belongs. STOP PIRACY aims to fight counterfeiting and piracy through stronger cooperation and coordination between the members and inform the public about the damaging consequences of counterfeiting and piracy. STOP PIRACY was founded in 2005 on the initiative of the Swiss Federal Institute of Intellectual Property and the Swiss International Chamber of Commerce.

www.stop-piracy.ch