



Differences between a “pharmacy” and a licensed “medicine store”

- Apart from “pharmacies”, the Ordinance also provides for the licensing of the “listed sellers of poisons”. “Listed sellers of poisons” are generally known as “medicine stores” which can sell common drugs, such as cold and flu medicines or pain-killers. The “medicine stores”, which do not have registered pharmacists stationed in the shops, are not allowed to sell pharmacist supervised sale and prescription medicines. They are also not allowed to use the title “pharmacy” or to display the prescribed logo.
- To learn more about the differences between “pharmacy” and “medicine store”, please refer to the website of the Drug Office of the Department of Health.

(https://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/news_informations/pharmacy_medstore.html)



Difference: Medicine Stores (en)

How can I ascertain whether a store is a pharmacy or a licensed medicine store?

- The list of licensed traders can be downloaded from the website of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong.
(https://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/news_informations/relicList2.html?indextype=4A)
(https://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/news_informations/relicList2.html?indextype=3A)
- Additionally, members of the public can also use the “Search Drug Dealers” function (https://www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/consumer/search_drug_dealers2.html) provided on the website of the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong. One may verify whether or not retail shop is a pharmacy or a licensed medicine store by inputting its name or address.



Authorized Sellers of Poisons (list) (en)



Listed Sellers of Poisons (list) (en)



Drug Dealer Search (en)

<https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap138> (en)<https://www.drugoffice.gov.hk>

Other information

Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance:
(https://www.elegislation.gov.hk/hk/cap138/en?INDEX_CS=N&xpid=ID_1438402705536_002)

Drug Office:
(<https://www.drugoffice.gov.hk>)

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“Pharmacies” in Hong Kong



Enquiry

(1) Retailers Regulatory Unit, Licensing and Compliance Division, Drug Office:


Telephone: 3107 3477 or 3107 2196

Address: Room 2001-2002, 20/F, Dah Sing Financial Centre, 248 Queen's Road East, Wan Chai, Hong Kong

(2) Email: pharmgeneral@dh.gov.hk

Trivia about the prescribed logo



- The logo “” prescribed under the Ordinance is of a unique design. The logo is featured with a red “cross” as the main body, and in the middle square of the “cross” is a white background with the symbol “R”. This symbol “R” has a long history but the origin could not be ascertained. It can be recognized as “prescription”, and implies that a registered pharmacist is available at the premises to provide dispensing service for doctor’s prescriptions.
- Members of the public should be cautious to avoid being confused by “lookalike” logos. Similar logos, that having a “cross” as the main body (red or in other colours) with the central square showing other text, symbol or pattern, are all mimics. Retailers displaying “lookalike” logos are not “pharmacies”.


How pharmacies are regulated in Hong Kong?

- In Hong Kong, “pharmacies” are referring to “authorized sellers of poisons” regulated under the Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance, Cap. 138, Laws of Hong Kong (the Ordinance). These retailers are “authorized” to sell controlled medicines (known as “poisons” in the Ordinance) by a registered pharmacist or in his presence and under his supervision.
- According to the Ordinance, only “authorized sellers of poisons” can use the terms “pharmacy”, “dispensary”, “drug-store” or the Chinese term “藥房”.
- More importantly, only “authorized sellers of poisons” can arrange to display a logo prescribed under the Ordinance at their registered premises, i.e.



- It is illegal for a retailer, other than an “authorized seller of poisons”, to use the above terms (i.e. “pharmacy”, “dispensary”, “drug-store” or “藥房”) or display the prescribed logo. The maximum penalty for illegal display of the prescribed logo or use of the above title upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and 2-year imprisonment.

How to identify a “pharmacy”

- The most obvious way to identify a “pharmacy” is you can see the prescribed logo “” displayed at its premises. The logo is featured with a red “cross” as the main body, and in the middle square of the “cross” is a white background with a symbol “R”, which symbolizes “prescription”.
- Almost all “authorized sellers of poisons” are displaying this logo. **Any other retailers using logo mimicking the prescribed logo are not “pharmacies” at all.**
- Only “authorized seller of poisons” can use “pharmacy”, “dispensary”, “drug-store” or “藥房”. According to the law, a “pharmacy” should display the following documents in a conspicuous place in the premises: (a) the registration certificate of the pharmacist, (b) a notice setting out the hours of attendance of the pharmacist, and (c) the certificate of registration of that premises issued under the Ordinance.

