

What to Consider When You Select, Purchase and Use a Medical Device?



Medical Device Division
Email : mdd@dh.gov.hk
Website : www.mdd.gov.hk



Department of Health

Introduction

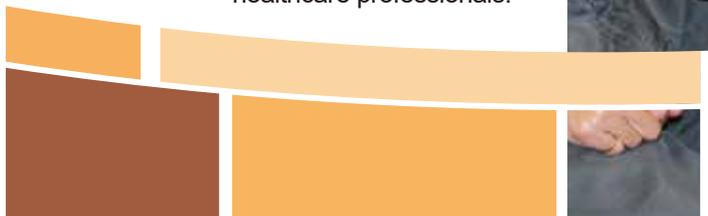


As technology advances, a great number of medical devices become available in the market. Medical device means any instrument, equipment or material (not including drugs), that is intended for human beings for the purpose(s) of diagnosis, prevention, treatment or monitoring of disease. Examples include pacemaker, blood pressure monitor, home-use blood glucose meter, etc. In addition, contraceptive devices (e.g. condoms), and products for disinfection of medical devices (e.g. contact lens solutions) are also considered medical devices.

Even for the same type of medical device, different brands or models may vary greatly in terms of their design, function, operation, price, quality, and user-friendliness. To ensure that the device you select, purchase and use is safe, functional and appropriate to your need, you should try to obtain reliable and accurate information about the choices available and consult the relevant healthcare professionals.

Use of unsafe medical devices or improper use of medical devices may not only cost you money, but, more importantly, your health.

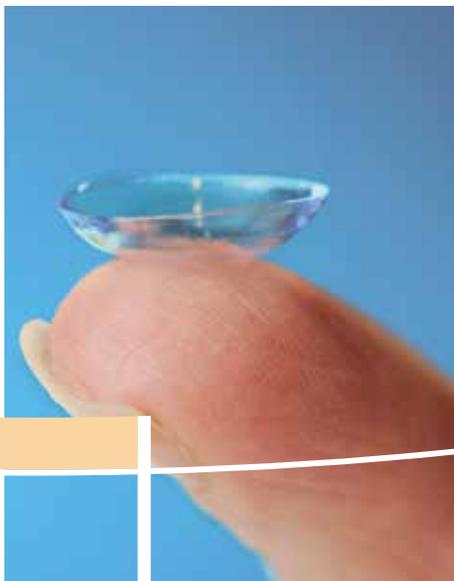
Some people may buy a medical device online from overseas websites for personal use. Sometimes, they may give it to their families and friends as a gift. You should know the risks involved with such practice, and if in doubt, seek advice from healthcare professionals.



Smart Choice and Proper Use of Medical Devices

Note before selecting and purchasing a medical device

1. Not every medical device is suitable to be operated by anyone. Beware that some high-risk devices must be operated by qualified or well-trained personnel.
2. Before purchasing any medical device or when in doubt about the promotional information of a device, always consult a healthcare professional to ensure that the device you are going to purchase suits your health condition.
3. Know the risks of purchasing medical devices online from overseas websites:
 - The quality of the medical devices may not be guaranteed.
 - The manufacturer or supplier may not provide instructions/user manuals in your language.
 - There may not be any warranty or other after-sales service.
 - Although the name and model of the device purchased online may appear the same as that supplied by the local supplier, there may be slight differences in their functions.
 - Different units of measurement may be used in different areas. For example, mmol/L is the common unit of measurement of blood glucose in Hong Kong, but in some areas, mg/dL may be more commonly used. Misunderstanding of the unit of measurement may lead to inappropriate treatment.
 - Devices designed to suit the electricity supply of other places may not be suitable for use in Hong Kong (220V and 50Hz).
 - Devices purchased may be substandard, counterfeit, used, or have passed their expiry dates.
 - There may be a risk of leaking of personal information, such as name, medical records, address and credit card information.
 - If a problem occurs, seeking replacement or refund may be difficult.
 - You may not know about product recalls involving the device being conducted overseas.



Note when selecting and purchasing a medical device

1. Purchase medical devices from reputable suppliers.
2. Beware of exaggerated publicity tactics, for example –
 - Offering free advisory services or health talks, with the actual aim of promoting the sales of a product.
 - Presentation of complex data and theory that is difficult to comprehend, creating an illusion that the effectiveness of the product is supported by science and research.
 - Using fake medical references for promotion.
 - Claiming celebrity endorsement or quoting user reviews and testimonies to exaggerate the effectiveness of the product (e.g. claiming that the product is 100% effective and 100% safe).
3. Find out whether you can operate the device on your own. For example, ascertain if you are familiar with the setup, operation, cleansing, maintenance and proper disposal of the device. Also identify if there are other factors which limit your use of the device. For example, whether the monitor display is clear and the alarm is loud enough to be heard.
4. When you purchase the device, check whether all necessary accessories and personal protective equipment are included or whether they have to be bought separately. Enquire the supplier about the maintenance arrangement and after-sale services, including warranty period, contract terms, technical support services and maintenance fee, etc. Besides the price of the device itself, also consider the replacement frequencies and the cost of the consumables (e.g. batteries, test strips, etc).
5. Ensure that devices powered by electrical mains are compatible with the electricity supply in Hong Kong (220V and 50 Hz).
6. Upon delivery, check the device and accessories immediately to ensure that they are free from any damage. Also check and note the expiry dates for those devices and accessories which have shelf lives.



Note when using a medical device

1. Familiarise yourself with the device, including the intended use, operating procedures, safety features, maintenance and proper disposal procedures. Maintain contact with the supplier, make relevant enquiries and write down all the important points for future reference.
2. Check whether it is suitable to operate the device in the intended environment (e.g. Is the environment too noisy for the alarm to be heard? Is the ambient humidity and temperature suitable for the normal operation of the device?)
3. Read the instructions for use or user manual carefully and keep it close to your device so that you can refer to it from time to time.
4. Follow the instructions when using the devices. If in doubt about the operation of the device or when abnormalities occur, stop using the device and contact the device supplier immediately. Prepare a backup plan so that you know what to do when your device fails.
5. If the device is battery-powered, keep some spare batteries. For device operated by rechargeable battery, charge the battery according to the manufacturer's instruction and keep the battery in good operating condition.



6. Train all family members and domestic helpers who may operate the device to familiarise with the proper procedures to operate, store and maintain the device.
7. Stop using the device beyond its expiry date and follow the instructions for proper disposal.
8. Pay special attention to announcements on safety information related to the device. Register with the supplier and always update them with your latest contact information so that important messages can duly reach you in case problems of the device arise or when there is a recall of the products. Also refer to the website of Medical Device Division of Department of Health (<https://www.mdd.gov.hk>) to obtain the latest safety information.
9. Consult healthcare professionals regularly to review whether your health condition is suitable for and/or still requires the use of the device.
10. Store medical devices out of reach by children and pets.

