



## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON NATIONAL ANTI-COUNTERFEIT MOBILE AUTHENTICATION SERVICE (MAS)**

### **Section 1: Education on counterfeits**

***Q: What is a fake/counterfeit drug? A sub-standard drug?***

A: The World Health Organization has the following definition: “A counterfeit drug is a drug that has been deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source. Counterfeiting can apply to both branded and generic products and ... may include products with the correct ingredients or with the wrong ingredients, without active ingredients, with insufficient active ingredients or with fake packaging.”

All counterfeit drugs are sub-standard drugs, but not all sub-standard drugs are counterfeits. Sub-standard drugs include drugs made from original manufacturers but with a manufacturing error. They also include expired drugs and drugs that have not been stored properly. You should avoid all substandard drugs, especially those that are fake/counterfeit.

***Q: Are fake drugs really an issue?***

A: Yes. The growing global problem of counterfeit medication poses a crippling risk to healthcare systems in developing nations. Though authoritative studies are few and far between, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that counterfeit drug prevalence rates fall between 10% to 30% in the developing world, compared to 1% or less in industrialized nations.

The U.S.-based Center for Medicines in the Public Interest (CMPI) projects that by 2010, US \$75 billion worth of counterfeit drugs will be sold annually. Fake drug sales are expected to grow at 13% yearly till 2010, a rate significantly higher than the estimated 7.5% annual growth for genuine pharmaceutical commerce.

***Q: Who makes fake drugs? Why and how do they do so?***

A: Fake drugs are made by counterfeiters usually for profit and sometimes to launder other illicitly obtained money. They can be small-scale or large-scale and make their money by selling the real drugs or the bogus ones. From organized crime to street hoodlums, there are thousands of Nigerians making big money selling counterfeit drugs. The drugs may be stolen or purchased for little money to begin with, adulterated or diluted, then resold through a series of distributors for much less than the drug cost from the manufacturer, but very profitably for the crooks who are selling them. The distributor and pharmacy can then buy them less expensively, too, meaning





# NAFDAC Cares

they'll profit more than they would have if the drugs had been purchased from a clean and legal source. The drug may be manufactured using non-pharma ingredients, like sugar pills or even just colored water, then sold into the legal system with plenty of profit built in.

***Q: How can I determine if a drug is genuine or fake?***

A: It is currently very challenging to determine a genuine or fake drug by just looking at it. Some counterfeits look identical to the genuine products, even to the trained eye. It is even known that some fake drugs have very colourful holograms while their genuine versions do not.

We thus recommend that you purchase your drugs from trusted sources and patronize the MAS service, which makes it much easier to identify fake drugs.

***Q: Where am I likely to purchase fake drugs?***

A: Unfortunately, whether directly from the crooks, or from bona fide warehouses which have obtained drugs from illegal sources, counterfeit or adulterated drugs find their way to even friendly pharmacies, and then to unsuspecting patients. Their availability is therefore not restricted to any specific area of the country, pharmacy, hospital, clinic or retail outlet such as supermarket or store.

However, as a general rule, the risk is increased when you purchase your drugs from areas known as open markets which are poorly regulated drug markets in Nigeria.

***Q: Who is responsible for eliminating fake drugs in Nigeria and what are they doing about it?***

A: The battle against counterfeits in Nigeria is being fought by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), who have legislative responsibility for tackling the problem. In addition to the Nigeria Police Force and the Nigerian Customs, NAFDAC has also enlisted the help of Interpol in investigating drug counterfeiting cases. In addition, NAFDAC is setting up offices in India to curb the flow of counterfeits, in particular allegedly Chinese produced fakes labelled "Made in India", according to media reports.

***Q. What do I do if the drug I have bought is fake?***

A: If you are concerned that you have a counterfeit drug, do not take it. Show the medication to your pharmacist, the professional who is the most familiar with how the medication and its packaging should look. Your pharmacist will know if the manufacturer of your medication recently changed the appearance, flavor, or packaging of the drug. Additionally, if your pharmacy has changed from one generic drug manufacturer to another generic drug manufacturer, then the color or shape of your medication may be different. In this event, your pharmacist can verify that your medication is not counterfeit and can explain the change. If you



**Supported By:**  
BIOFEM Pharm (NIG) Ltd.  
Phone: 08059BIOFEM

**SPROXIL.com**

**Technology By:**  
Sproxil Nigeria Limited  
www.sproxil.com



suspect that a drug you have purchased is counterfeit, you can report it to the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) online at <http://www.nafdac.gov.ng/> or by phone to our contact center in Nigeria at +2348039012929 (available on the Glo, Zain, MTN and Starcomms networks).

## **Section 2: Education on the Mobile Authentication Service (MAS) & troubleshooting**

### ***Q: What is the Mobile Authentication Service (MAS)?***

A: The Mobile Authentication Service is a NAFDAC programme supported by BIOFEM that uses Sproxil technology to address the drug counterfeiting challenges in Nigeria. This new effort from NAFDAC and its partners allows anyone in Nigeria to check the authenticity of their medication with a simple text message. This is a world-first, showing the proactiveness of Nigeria in the global fight to rid the world of fake medication.

### ***Q: How does MAS work?***

A: As you purchase drugs, you will find a scratch card attached to the package. Simply scratch & text the unique numbers on the scratchcard to the shortcode 38353. You will instantly receive an SMS reply confirming the authenticity or fakeness of the product.

### ***Q: Why is it only available for Glucophage?***

A: For now Glucophage is the first product in Nigeria to adopt the MAS at this introductory phase of the technology. It is expected that the service will grow and cover many products.

### ***Q: How do I use the scratch-off card?***

A: It's very simple. Just use a coin to scratch- off the surface and obtain your codes, just as you do with top-up airtime for your mobile phone. Always scratch-off & text to 38353 at the point of purchase to be sure you are purchasing a genuine product.

### ***Q: How much does this service cost?***

A: This service is entirely free for all consumers. Therefore, all you have to do is scratch, text and obtain your response for free.

### ***Q: Where is this service available?***

A: The MAS service is available anywhere there is a mobile signal in Nigeria.

### ***Q: What mobile networks can I use?***





# NAFDAC Cares

A: Currently, you may send a free text message from the three largest mobile networks in Nigeria: Glo, MTN and Zain. You will be able to access MAS from other networks shortly.

***Q: Is the shortcode the same on all networks?***

A: Yes! This is a security feature. The MAS shortcode is 38353 and it is the same on all mobile networks. You should only text the scratch-off codes to 38353.

***Q: What happens if I don't have a mobile phone?***

A: Since the text message is absolutely free, anyone with a mobile phone can help you use the MAS system to check if your drugs are genuine or fake. Try it – ask your pharmacist today.

***Q: What do I do if I have no service on my phone at time and place of purchase?***

A: The MAS service works anywhere there is cellular signal. We encourage you to check your medication as soon as your phone picks up a cellular signal. As mobile network operators aggressively expand their coverage, areas without cellular signal are fast becoming rare.

***Q: How long will I wait to get a response after I scratch and text?***

A: Responses on the MAS platform are delivered in a timely way, and are often based on the number of people using a mobile network at a time. Our studies indicate that SMS responses are often received within one minute.

***Q: The SMS response says "fake drug". What do I do next?***

A: The first thing to do is to contact the pharmacist in the pharmacy where you bought the drug. Pharmacists have been trained to report adverse drug reactions and they can assist you to report your findings to NAFDAC.

You may also call our contact center in Nigeria at +2348039012929 (available on the Glo, Zain, MTN and Starcomms networks).

Our technology has also made it possible for us to identify the response you have obtained and contact you immediately in order for us to reach you wherever you are and transfer the information to NAFDAC for follow up.

***Q: When will my drug have this service?***

A: Working with NAFDAC, the pharmaceutical industry and health stakeholders, we strive to increase the drug authentication service to cover all drugs at risk of counterfeiting. If you have a pressing need to see your drug protected from counterfeits, kindly contact NAFDAC at +234 1 452 1212 or email Sproxil at [nigeria@sproxil.com](mailto:nigeria@sproxil.com).



**Supported By:**  
BIOFEM Pharm (NIG) Ltd.  
Phone: 08059BIOFEM

**SPROXIL.com**

**Technology By:**  
Sproxil Nigeria Limited  
[www.sproxil.com](http://www.sproxil.com)



# NAFDAC Cares

***Q: Is there any need to scratch all six labels if I purchase a box of Glucophage?***

A: Yes! You can only be sure about a product's genuineness by scratching and texting the Sproxil codes before you use your medication.

***Q. Will I get the same diabetic tip for each response or text?***

A: No – we have many tips for you! We strive to provide you with additional care as you manage your diabetes and vary the tips to keep you informed with the latest discoveries in diabetes care management.

***Q. How do I know the reply I get back is not fake?***

A: Sproxil's MAS technology is very secure. It is based on Asymmetric Encryption, the same technology that powers trillions of dollars in bank transfers and e-commerce worldwide. We have simplified access to such trusted technology and localized it for cash-based societies. By sending a text message to our shortcode, 38353, you can be assured that the response you get is right from us. Make sure you remember the shortcode (38353) – don't text Sproxil's scratch-off codes to any other number!

## **Section 3: Education on partners and roles**

***Q: What is NAFDAC's role in this fight against counterfeiting?***

A: NAFDAC has a long successful history of fighting counterfeits by inspecting drug manufacturing environments, imports at Nigeria's ports, drug distributors and conducting raids in open markets to catch fakers.

***Q: What is a NAFDAC Registration Number (NRN)?***

A: NAFDAC requires all regulated substances to be registered with them. During this registration process, a unique number is provided for the registered product. This number is required to be printed on the outer-most consumer packaging of a product, and can help regulators identify the true owners of a product.

***Q: Does the scratch-card number replace the NAFDAC Registration Number?***

A: No. The NAFDAC Registration Number helps Nigeria's regulatory authority identify true owners of a product. However, Sproxil's scratch-off labels identify whether a product is original or not. Thus, the NAFDAC Registration Number and Sproxil's technology work closely together to further enhance the product security that Nigerian consumers can enjoy daily.



**Supported By:**  
BIOFEM Pharm (NIG) Ltd.  
Phone: 08059BIOFEM

**SPROXIL.com**

**Technology By:**  
Sproxil Nigeria Limited  
www.sproxil.com



# NAFDAC Cares

***Q: Will this service apply to medicine I get from Hospitals and Clinics?***

A: Yes. In time, Sproxil and its partners will expand the initiative to all drugs at risk of counterfeiting, including those sold from Hospitals and Clinics. If you would like to request that your drug or hospital be added to the scheme, contact NAFDAC at +234 1 452 1212.

***Q: How are the pharmacists and healthcare professionals involved?***

A: Pharmacist and other healthcare professionals including their various professional bodies have been involved in fighting the menace of fake and substandard drugs by organizing rallies and campaign to educate the public.

They will obviously be involved in providing support services to you and thus help you to effectively use the MAS when you purchase your drugs from a registered pharmacy. They are the first line of contact when you have any question or observation about your service.

***Q: What can I do to help?***

A: The easiest way to help is to spread the word about MAS: tell your friends and family and encourage them to ask for it whenever they buy drugs. You may contact NAFDAC at +234 1 452 1212 to advocate for your drug's inclusion on the MAS scheme. You could also contact your doctor or pharmacist to encourage them to participate.

We would also be glad to hear any feedback you may have on our service. Kindly contact us at [nigeria@sproxil.com](mailto:nigeria@sproxil.com).

***Q: Who is BIOFEM?***

A: BIOFEM is an indigenous pharmaceutical organization and is the sole agent of one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies known as Merck Serono. Together with Merck, we have been able to furnish the healthcare industry with innovative products that solve health problems and therefore meet both the needs of doctors and patients. Our products are carefully designed and are produced in a world class pharmaceutical manufacturing outfit in France.

To know more about Biofem pharmaceuticals please visit [www.biofempharmaceuticals.com](http://www.biofempharmaceuticals.com)

***Q: Who is Sproxil?***

A: Sproxil is a privately-backed social enterprise with a pretty neat solution to minimize the presence of counterfeits in emerging markets, while connecting legitimate companies directly to their consumers in a very scalable way. We do this with some remarkably simple scratch-off tags



**Supported By:**  
BIOFEM Pharm (NIG) Ltd.  
Phone: 08059BIOFEM



**Technology By:**  
Sproxil Nigeria Limited  
[www.sproxil.com](http://www.sproxil.com)



# NAFDAC Cares

and robust back-end analytics, all nicely tied up with rock-hardened, proven technologies in developing nations. You can learn more online, at <http://sproxil.com/about.php>



**Supported By:**  
BIOFEM Pharm (NIG) Ltd.  
Phone: 08059BIOFEM

**SPROXIL**.com

**Technology By:**  
Sproxil Nigeria Limited  
[www.sproxil.com](http://www.sproxil.com)