

The World Health Organization (WHO) on Thursday issued warnings on fake drugs claiming to contain the active ingredient found in Novo Nordisk's (NOVOB.CO), opens new tab diabetes drug Ozempic and weight-loss treatment Wegovy.

The alert addresses three falsified batches of semaglutide in Brazil in October 2023, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in October 2023, and the United States of America in December 2023.

WHO underlined that it has seen a concerning rise in reports of counterfeit semaglutide medications across the globe since 2022. This alert marks the first official warning issued by WHO after confirming the authenticity of these reports.

Dr. Yukiko Nakatani, Assistant Director-General for Essential Medicines and Health Products at the WHO, has urged healthcare professionals, regulatory bodies, and the public to be vigilant against these counterfeit medications.

"We call on everyone involved to stop using any suspicious medicine and report it to the appropriate authorities," she emphasized.

Semaglutide medications, including the specific brand involved in this counterfeit alert, are prescribed for type 2 diabetes to manage blood sugar levels and additionally reduce the risk of cardiovascular complications.

The global health body warns that counterfeit semaglutide medications can be dangerous. These fakes may lack essential ingredients, leading to uncontrolled blood sugar or weight issues.

"Patients who are using these products can take actions such as buying medicines with prescriptions from licensed physicians and avoid buying medicines from unfamiliar or unverified sources, such as those that may be found online," the agency said.

Lilly and Novo have sued several entities to stop them from selling products claiming to contain the active ingredients tirzepatide and semaglutide that are used in their respective popular diabetes and weight-loss drugs.