



Enforcement Notice:

Prescription-only medicines used for weight management

Who we are

The [Committee of Advertising Practice \(CAP\)](#) writes the advertising rules, which are enforced by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), the UK's independent advertising regulator. You can read about the UK advertising regulatory system [on the ASA website](#).

The [Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency](#) (MHRA) is the UK statutory regulator for medicines, medical devices and blood components for transfusion.

The [General Pharmaceutical Council](#) (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies in Great Britain.

Why are we contacting you?

Prescription-only medicines (POMs) **cannot be advertised to the public**. Ads for POMs break [Rule 12.12 of the CAP Code](#) and the [Human Medicines Regulations 2012](#) (HMRs).

CAP, the MHRA and the GPhC are concerned about the advertising of POMs used for weight management¹, including on social media. Medicines that CAP has observed in advertising include:

- Saxenda (liraglutide)
- Ozempic (semaglutide)*
- Wegovy (semaglutide)
- Rybelsus (semaglutide)
- Mounjaro (tirzepatide)
- Mysimba (naltrexone / bupropion)*
- Victoza (liraglutide)*

We are therefore working together to remind advertisers of the general prohibition on advertising POMs, including POMs used for weight management, and of the enforcement actions that will be taken by those who regulate the sector.

Scope

This notice applies to ads for POMs used for weight management in all media within our remit (see *Appendix*), including on social media platforms and online. This includes:

- paid-for ads on social media, such as image or video ads on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok
- non-paid-for, or organic, content on a pharmacy's and other provider's own social media channels
- sponsored searches on search engines such as Google

¹ CAP understands that Ozempic, Rybelsus and Victoza products are licensed in the UK for the treatment of type 2 diabetes. CAP has observed the advertising of these medicines in the context of weight management for prescription outside the licensed indications.



- influencer marketing (see [Remit: Social media](#))
- affiliate ads

Guidance

There is a general prohibition on the advertising of POMs. Therefore, you must not promote products such as Ozempic, Wegovy or Mounjaro to members of the public.



Do not include the names of POMs in ads

- Directly promoting a POM, for example by using its brand name or active ingredient in an ad for weight loss treatments, is almost certainly a breach of the rules.



Promote the consultation, not the POM

- Ensure that ads for weight loss treatment only promote the consultation, or a [medicine that can lawfully be advertised to the public](#), rather than a POM.



Be careful around indirectly promoting a POM

- Keep in mind that you can break the rules by indirectly advertising POMs, for example by advertising a POM [without identifying it by name](#).

What happens next?

Please immediately review your advertising with reference to the *Guidance* section above and make any changes required. In particular:

1. Remove all named POMs from your ads
2. Ensure that your ads do not indirectly promote a POM

As this Enforcement Notice restates existing advertising rules and does not introduce new requirements, we will continue to enforce the rules, as set out in the CAP Code.

Enforcement

We are currently deploying the ASA's AI-based [Advice Ad Monitoring system](#) to actively scan for ads that breach this Enforcement Notice. This may result in sanctions, including the removal of content and social media accounts. We are also working closely with our regulatory partners to ensure that, where appropriate, advertisers may be referred to a statutory regulator for further sanction.

[MHRA guidance](#) outlines the statutory powers of the Agency acting on behalf of Health Ministers. To fulfil its statutory duties, the MHRA can monitor medicines advertising, and it can investigate complaints about advertising. It is expected that advertisers will work with the MHRA to issue acceptable advertising; however, the Agency can resort to formal statutory powers laid down in the Human Medicines Regulations. Further information is available in chapters 8 and 9 of the MHRA Blue Guide.

[GPhC guidance](#) states that pharmacy owners and the Superintendent Pharmacist, if there is one, should follow the law and guidance on the advertising and promotion of medicines. Failing to comply with these standards could result in the GPhC taking enforcement action. This could be against the pharmacy, the pharmacy owner, the Superintendent Pharmacist,



or all three. They could also investigate the fitness to practise of all the pharmacy professionals involved.

Appendix: Relevant Code rules, legislation and useful reading

This guidance should be read in conjunction with:

- The [MHRA's Blue Guide: Advertising and Promotion of Medicines in the UK](#) which explains the provisions and requirements laid down in the legislation on advertising medicines. Specifically, [Appendix 6](#) of the Blue Guide outlines the requirements for treatment service providers to help you ensure you don't break the law, and
- The [GPhC's Guidance for registered pharmacies providing pharmacy services at a distance, including on the internet](#), which sets out their expectations of pharmacy owners and Superintendent Pharmacists when pharmacy services are provided at a distance.

Relevant [CAP Code](#) rules:

12.12 Prescription-only medicines or prescription-only medical treatments may not be advertised to the public.

Media within the remit of the CAP Code include:

- Ads on the internet including on social media and on companies' own websites
- Press ads
- Commercial e-mail and text messages
- Posters/billboards
- Leaflets and brochures
- Direct mail

Relevant legislation

The [Human Medicines Regulations 2012](#) prohibit the publishing of an "advertisement that is likely to lead to the use of a prescription only medicine", as laid out in regulation 284 (1).

Other useful reading

Please also refer to the following articles which outline the ASA's current position on a number of relevant topics:

[Healthcare: Prescription-only medicine](#)

[Weight control: Prescription-only medicines](#)

[Healthcare: Prescription-only Medicines \(websites\)](#)

[What we cover](#)

[Remit: Social media](#)

