



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 CAP Code [rule 12.12](#) and breach 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 organic content on pharmacies' and other providers' own social media channels
- paid-for ads on search engines such as Google
- influencer marketing (see [Remit: Social media](#))
- affiliate ads

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.



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. But there are various ways in which ads can breach this general prohibition beyond featuring a named product in an advert. Below is a further explanation of some of the key principles to observe in your advertising.



Do not include the names of POMs in ads

- Promoting a POM by using its brand name, generic name or active ingredient in an ad for weight loss products or services is almost certainly a breach of the rules.

Do not promote a POM by using descriptors or descriptions that are likely to be understood by consumers as referring to a POM

- In the context of an ad for weight-loss products and services, the following is a non-exhaustive list of language that is likely to be seen as referring to POMs:
 - [“Weight Loss Injection”](#)
 - [“Weight Loss Pen”](#)
 - [“Obesity Treatment Jab”](#)
 - [“GLP-1”](#)
 - Abbreviated words that refer to POMs, such as [“SemaPen”](#)
 - [Descriptions that identify the product in question](#)

Do not use imagery in ads that is likely to be understood by consumers as denoting a POM

- Injection pens that feature a POM name will almost certainly be seen as promoting a POM. In the context of an ad for a weight-loss product or service, imagery that is likely to be understood by consumers as [depicting an injection](#) pen is also likely to be seen as promoting a POM.

Do not direct consumers from an ad seemingly for non-POM products or services directly to another ad promoting a POM

- Ads that refer to general weight-loss products or services should not direct consumers to other ads promoting POMs. For example, [paid-for ads on social media](#) or [sponsored searches](#) should not contain links to a landing page that promotes a named POM.



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.

What happens next?

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

1. All named POMs
2. Descriptors or descriptions that are likely to be understood by consumers as referring to POMs, for example by giving enough background information to the product being advertised that it will be clear to consumers that the product is in fact a POM
3. Imagery that is likely to be understood by consumers as depicting a POM
4. Links to landing pages that promote POMs

Enforcement

The CAP Compliance team deploys the ASA's AI-assisted [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](#) rule:

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 guidance:

[Healthcare: Prescription-only medicine](#)

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

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

[Remit: Social media](#)

