

How the ASA is protecting the public from harmful weight-loss prescription-only medicines ads

The **Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)** is the UK's independent regulator of advertising by legitimate businesses across all media. We respond to concerns and complaints from consumers and businesses and take action to ban ads which are misleading, harmful, offensive, or irresponsible.

January is often a time where people are bombarded with ads for fad diets and weight loss solutions. Turn on the TV, read a newspaper, browse social media; chances are you'll have seen or heard about weight-loss prescription only medicines (POMs). In a short space of time, they have become part of a national conversation. We are here to protect people from irresponsible and, in the case of weight-loss POMs, illegal ads. This is why we set out our commitment to an **extensive rolling project of monitoring, investigation, enforcement action and partnership working**.

The rules on advertising POMs

- Prescription-only medicines (POMs) are a specific class of medicine. A POM has to be prescribed by a doctor or other authorised health professional and must be dispensed from a pharmacy or from another specifically licensed place.
- Reflecting the law, our [Advertising Codes](#) do not allow the advertising of POMs. They are not a cosmetic treatment to be used without serious consideration and advertisers should not be promoting them to the public.
- In traditional non-broadcast media, such as leaflets, press ads, brochures, posters and even on sponsored ads, the ASA considers almost every reference to a POM to be a promotion of a POM. The rule also applies to posts on advertiser's own social media pages.
- Crucially, we are not here to regulate the drugs, their safety or availability. Our job is to protect people from the irresponsible and illegal advertising of these drugs.

Weight-loss POMs

- The ASA has observed a growing trend in the advertising of weight-loss POMs such as Ozempic, Wegovy and Mounjaro.
- With weight-loss medicines becoming part of a national conversation and public awareness of and interest in these drugs growing, there is an increased and significant risk of harm from irresponsible ads.
- Although we recognise the role that weight-loss POMs might play in combatting obesity, we also know that concerns about weight-loss can have negative impacts, including on the body confidence of both men and women.
- We provide a range of advice and resources to advertisers to help them stick to the rules and advertise responsibly. Our advice to advertisers includes:
 - Do not advertise POMs to the public
 - Promote the "consultation" itself rather than the product
 - Do not claim that customers can achieve a specific rate or amount of weight-loss
 - Do not refer to an excessively fast rate of weight-loss in individuals
 - Do not feature health professionals or celebrities
 - Do not use irresponsible claims or imagery
 - Do not use before and after photographs
 - Take care with price lists (Special offer, limited time or discounted prices that apply only to POMs)

- Where permitted, information should be balanced and factual
For more information, read our CAP Advice [here](#).

Our warning to weight-loss POMs advertisers

- Although the law and our rules are clear, we are aware through our own proactive monitoring that various prescription-only medicines and products such as ‘skinny jabs’ and ‘flab jabs’ are still being advertised against the rules via influencers, paid-for online ads and in social media.
- In December 2024, we issued a [warning](#) to businesses and individuals who were targeting members of the public with ads for weight-loss POMs.
- Alongside our warning we’re committed to a rolling programme of monitoring, investigation, enforcement action and partnership working, including:
 - Launching formal proactive investigations as part of a project-based approach to identifying and tackling problems and setting clear precedents for advertisers.
 - Working with online platforms to address the use of POM names in ads, including holding discussions with Google and Meta about preventing named POMs appearing in ads in the first instance, and having problem ads taken down.
 - Capturing the ways advertising is evolving, including influencers offering discount codes or using generic phrases to indirectly promote prescription-only medicines as a means of evading detection and/or the rules.
 - Intelligence sharing with regulatory partners and considering referrals of repeat/persistent offenders as necessary

Monitoring and Enforcement

- Since issuing our warning, we’ve been carrying out extensive monitoring and enforcement work aided by our AI-powered Active Ad Monitoring system (AAMs).
- Working closely with partners MHRA and GPhC, we issued a joint [Enforcement Notice](#) in April 2025 to all pharmacies registered with the GPhC and provided a joint training webinar for pharmacies on how the rules apply and the help and guidance that’s in place.
- We also published an updated [Enforcement Notice](#) in September 2025 following out first set of published rulings (see below).
- Tech assisted and proactive action
 - We have been harnessing our AAMs to check ads for weight-loss POMs at pace and scale, identify problems, provide intelligence to our Compliance and Investigations teams and take action as needed. This has included:
 - Monitoring weight-loss POM ads from 35 high priority pharmacies (those who had been identified as potentially problematic by our AAM system industry sweeps).
 - Capturing over 20,000 ads from these pharmacies (Feb to June 2025), 10,000 of which were for weight-loss treatments
 - Of those, 80 ads were found to directly use or mention a named weight-loss drug name. This points to over a 99% compliance rate for this strict element of the rules
 - Identifying that most of those ads did not reference a named weight-loss POM but instead used imagery of weight-loss pens or strongly implied the use of weight-loss POMs without naming the drug (something which our rulings address).
- CAP Enforcement
 - The ASA’s sister body, the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP)’s Compliance team contacted 20 advertisers in December 2024 and January 2025 who were featuring named weight-loss POMs in ads found by the AAMs review.
 - A follow-up in early March 2025, which involved reviewing around 600 ads identified as potentially advertising a POM, found that a quarter of those 20 advertisers were

still using named weight-loss POMs in their ads, but that most other ads featuring named weight-loss POMs had not been published for some time.

- This provided an early indication that ads featuring named weight-loss POMs have likely reduced in volume and that some advertisers have taken notice of warnings.

Rulings

- Our [rulings](#) form an integral part of this project as they set a clear precedent for advertisers. Followed by a series of proactive investigations, we published nine rulings in July 2025 which tackle common problem approaches seen in weight-loss POM ads.
 - Not only is advertising named weight-loss drugs (Wegovy, Mounjaro, Ozempic, Saxenda among others) banned, so is the use of various claims and images that indirectly advertise these medicines. Claims including “Weight Loss Injections”, “Weight Loss Pen”, “Obesity Treatment Jab” and “GLP-1” are references to weight-loss POMs and in breach of our rules.
 - These rulings also established using certain imagery will break the rules. That means unbranded medical injection pens, partial images of an advertiser branded medical injection pen and images of vials of liquid on the front, cannot be featured in ads.
- We also published three rulings in December 2025 which also raised serious social responsibility concerns.
 - We found that the ad by [MedExpress](#) encouraged new mothers to prioritise losing weight by using weight-loss medication, exploited their insecurities about body image and perpetuated pressures for them to conform to body image stereotypes. The ad was also irresponsible because weight-loss medications carry warnings for people who are breastfeeding.
 - We also found the ad by [Chequp](#) exploited people’s insecurities around body image by suggesting there was a stigma associated with being a certain size.

Next steps

- We are encouraged to see an improvement in advertisers sticking to the rules in some areas, but these problems will not be resolved overnight. This is why our ongoing joined up project is so important.
- We are conducting research on consumer understanding of weight-loss POM ads, as well as an Enforcement Report which shows compliance levels of the sector for 2025.
- If you see a weight loss POM ad which you believe is against our rules, please feel free to contact me (gracec@asa.org.uk) and/or the public affairs team (publicaffairs@asa.org.uk) and encourage your constituents to report it on our [online complaints form](#) so we can take swift action if necessary.
- Likewise, if you would like to talk to us about the project more generally, please get in touch.