



Enforcement Notice:

Advertising IV Drips (Coronavirus/COVID-19)

Who we are

We are the [Committee of Advertising Practice](#) (CAP). We write 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.

Why are we contacting you?

We understand that a small number of businesses have recently advertised intravenous drips (IV drips) to consumers on websites and social media. Some of these ads have stated or implied that the drips could help to prevent or treat Coronavirus/COVID-19.

On 22 April 2020 the ASA published [three rulings](#) which established that such claims breach the CAP Code. Please review this guidance and take immediate steps to check your ads and make changes as needed. From **Monday 4 May, we will start targeted enforcement, with the aid of monitoring technology, to find problem ads for removal or sanction**. This can include – where advertisers are unwilling to comply – referral to the MHRA or your professional regulatory body.

Scope

This notice applies to all promotion of IV drips to UK consumers in all media, including websites, marketing emails and social media platforms. This includes paid-for ads, non-paid-for marketing posts on your or others' pages and influencer marketing.

This notice is limited to direct or implied references to treat or prevent Coronavirus/COVID-19. It does not apply to other claims for IV drips (the focus of a distinct and ongoing ASA project). It does not apply to other injections or infusions; but we would very strongly advise against references to Coronavirus/COVID-19 in any advertising material for health or medical products.

Guidance



Remove all [direct references](#) to [Coronavirus or COVID-19](#). The MHRA considers that any mention of Coronavirus/COVID-19 in the promotion of an IV drip product would bring the product under medicines regulations. No medicinal products have been licensed for the prevention or treatment of Coronavirus/COVID-19.

- The CAP Code requires that medicinal claims and indications can be made only for medicinal products licenced by the MHRA or under the auspices of the European Medicines Agency.



Remove any [implied or indirect claims](#) that IV drips could help to prevent or treat Coronavirus/COVID-19. We are taking a broad approach to indirect claims in the current context, which includes:

- Claims to treat or prevent [viral infections](#) e.g. flu.
- References to [use of the IV drip supporting government or WHO advice, or other generalised references to the current situation surrounding the pandemic](#).
 - Claims to [“boost the immune system”](#) or [provide nutrients necessary to maintain a normally functioning immune system](#), in the context of general references to the pandemic, will be a problem.



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What about the ingredients in the drips?



Note that this applies both to formulated IV drip products *and* their constituent ingredients, even if those constituent ingredients are licensed medicines.

- Claims to treat or prevent Coronavirus/COVID-19 do not conform to the Summary of Product Characteristics for **ANY** formulated IV drip product or licensed medicine constituent ingredient.
 - *For example*, Ascorbic Acid (Vitamin C) is often used in IV drips but [its SPC is not indicated for the prevention or treatment of Coronavirus/COVID-19](#):
 - It is therefore not permissible to make medicinal claims to this effect on the basis of its inclusion.

Appendix: Code rules, legislation and useful reading

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [MHRA's The 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.

You should also take into account the [MHRA's Guidance Note 8: A guide to what is a medicinal product](#), which provides detailed guidance about what the MHRA considers a medicinal product.

Relevant [CAP Code](#) rules:



12.1 Objective claims must be backed by evidence, if relevant consisting of trials conducted on people. Substantiation will be assessed on the basis of the available scientific knowledge.

Medicinal or medical claims and indications may be made for a medicinal product that is licensed by the MHRA, VMD or under the auspices of the EMA, or for a CE-marked medical device. A medicinal claim is a claim that a product or its constituent(s) can be used with a view to making a medical diagnosis or can treat or prevent disease, including an injury, ailment or adverse condition, whether of body or mind, in human beings...

12.11 Medicines must have a licence from the MHRA, VMD or under the auspices of the EMA before they are marketed. Marketing communications for medicines must conform with the licence and the product's summary of product characteristics...

Want more? See CAP's advice on: [Healthcare: Medicinal claims](#) and a summary of our current prioritisation principles: [COVID-19: our regulatory approach](#)

Or contact the CAP [Copy Advice team](#), which offers a free and confidential bespoke pre-publication advice service