



Enforcement Notice:

Advertising Vitamin Shots (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 injectable Vitamin D and/or Vitamin B12 "Vitamin Shots" to UK consumers. Some of these ads have stated or implied that the shots could help to prevent or treat Coronavirus/COVID-19.

We understand that all licensed forms of injectable Vitamin D and injectable Vitamin B12 are prescription-only medicines (POMs).

POMs cannot be advertised to the public. Ads for POMs breach [Rule 12.12 of the CAP Code](#) and the [Human Medicines Regulations 2012](#) (HMRs). This applies even if the POM is administered by a registered medical professional.

Please review this guidance and take immediate steps to check your ads and make any changes as needed. From **8th June, 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 injectable Vitamin D and/or Vitamin B12 "Vitamin Shots" 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 does not directly apply to non-POM products or other "Vitamin Shots", but please see the guidance about direct or implied references to treat or prevent Coronavirus/COVID-19, which we consider relevant to all "Vitamin Shot" products.

Guidance

Take care not to directly or indirectly promote POMs to the public when promoting the treatment services you offer on social media. Ads that are aimed only at healthcare professionals are excluded from the rule (but we understand almost all ads/posts on social media could be seen by the public).



Remove direct references to Vitamin D and/or Vitamin B12 "Vitamin Shots".



Do not substitute direct references to POMs with indirect phrases that can only refer to a POM:

- For example, don't refer to "Vitamin Shots" when these can only refer to injectable Vitamin D and/or Vitamin B12.



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Additional Guidance re Coronavirus/COVID-19

Notwithstanding that POMs cannot be advertised to consumers, we are extremely concerned about direct or implied claims that “Vitamin Shots” can [help to treat or prevent Coronavirus/COVID-19](#).

This applies to ads for all “Vitamin Shot” products; not just Vitamin D or Vitamin B12



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



Remove any implied or indirect claims that “Vitamin Shots” 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 viruses](#) e.g. flu.



Note that claims to treat or prevent Coronavirus/COVID-19 do not conform to the Summary of Product Characteristics for **ANY** licensed “Vitamin Shot” product

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.

Relevant [CAP Code](#) rules:



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

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 Chapter 2, *Advertising to the public*, 284 (1).

Want more? See CAP's advice on: [Healthcare: Medicinal claims](#) and [Healthcare: Prescription-only medicines](#)

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