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Ad Alert

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ADVERTISING OF PRESCRIPTION-ONLY WEIGHT LOSS TREATMENTS AND OTHER PRESCRIPTION-ONLY MEDICINES

Action: Saxenda, Ozempic (injectables), Rybelsus (oral) and other prescription-only medicines, such as Botox, should not be advertised to the public. Please consult Copy Advice before accepting ads for what you suspect might be prescription-only medicines

This is a reissue of an Ad Alert first published in December 2007 and last updated in March 2019.

The CAP Compliance team remains concerned by the continuing appearance of ads that offer, refer to or allude to prescription-only medicines. We have observed an increase in the advertisement of prescription-only weight loss treatments, often referred to in shorthand as “skinny jabs”, “skinny pens” and “skinny pills”, typically branded versions of semaglutide and liraglutide. Common brands include Saxenda, Ozempic (injectables), Rybelsus (oral). Our previous advice to look out for other POMs such as Botox remains.

Rule 12.12 of the CAP Code states: “prescription-only medicines or prescription-only medical treatments may not be advertised to the public”.

There are three categories in the health and beauty sector that are most commonly associated with the problematic advertising of POMs: cosmetic treatments (injectables), hair replacement programmes and impotence or erectile dysfunction products. It is not always obvious from an ad whether a product is a medicine or whether a treatment programme involves the use of medicines, but trademarked or copyrighted names often give a clue that a medicine is being used.

Note – this Alert does not apply to “Viagra Connect”, which was re-classified from a prescription-only medicine (POM) to a pharmacy medicine (P) in November 2017.

We would be grateful for your cooperation to ensure that ads for POMs are not placed. Please consult the CAP Copy Advice team if you are unsure about ads or the Code’s requirements.