

Stricter norms for pharma product ads likely soon

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New Delhi: Advertisers of pharmaceutical products and medical devices may soon face stricter curbs. The government is planning to make amendments to the drug law to keep a check on advertisements which may be misleading consumers.

While advertisement of prescription drugs is prohibited in the country, companies often find loopholes in the law to advertise about therapies or run campaigns related to such products. These products are often tweaked to circumvent the law and instead become qualified as food products which can be marketed through promotions and advertisements. Similarly, there are no stringent regulations for medical device advertisements while many new products are making their way into the market.

Taking cognizance of the trend, the health ministry and the Central drug regulator are now trying to tighten the norms and regulations to keep a check on such ads which may misguide consumers. "We are revisiting the law which prohibits advertisements of prescription products. We are trying to bring in amendments which will impose more restrictions as well as monitor that promotional content is not misleading the consumer," a senior official in the Drug Controller General of India's office told TOI.

According to the official, the proposed changes will also include ayurvedic and homeopathic products and all kinds of medical devices besides stricter norms for medicines.

Recently, a parliamentary committee on health and family welfare slammed the government for "recurring delay" in amending the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954 and the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. The committee had also suggested that the health ministry must initiate action for inserting a new provision of seeking prior approval for advertisement content.

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