

Advertising for slimming

1. Introduction: What is slimming?

- 1.1 There is a good deal of confusion about slimming, about what given products can do, about whether some products work at all; and about the claims which are made for those products that can be shown to work effectively.
- 1.2 All advertisers, agencies and media are reminded that advertisements must conform not only to this Appendix but also to the letter and spirit of all other relevant sections of the Code.
- 1.3 All advertising offered for publication on either a mass loss or a figure control platform has to be checked by publishers with the appropriate media body before it can be accepted for publication. To facilitate this pre-publication checking, no new “slimming” copy should be submitted unless at least 7 days are available for checking.
- 1.4 When a new product or new formulation is introduced or when new claims are made for an existing product, the advertiser or agency should submit full substantiation for all new claims at the same time as the copy or illustration for the proposed advertisement, otherwise delays may be expected. Independent testimony will be required from medical practitioners registered in South Africa as to any physiological effects claimed. Testimonials from users of a product do not constitute substantiation.
- 1.5 Much confusion arises from the fact that wholly different kinds of products and services are sold under the general description of “slimming”. The primary task of the advertiser is to ensure that his audience is entirely clear which of the possible ways of achieving “slimness” is provided or helped by his product. The word “slim” is used, so far as the human form is concerned, to cover quite different basic situations: losing mass and controlling the figure so as to achieve an impression of slimness, either by strengthening of muscles or by the wearing of garments.

2. Mass loss

2.1 *General principles*

- 2.1.1 Mass limitation or control, by preventing the re-accumulation of excess fat, are also common objectives. References to mass loss in what follows are to be taken as referring also to mass limitation and control.
- 2.1.2 The only way for a person to lose mass, other than temporarily, is by burning up the excess fat his body has stored. A diet is the only practicable self-treatment for achieving a reduction in this excess fat.
- 2.1.3 Diet plans, and aids to dieting of the kinds dealt with below, are therefore the only products which may be offered in advertisements capable of effecting any loss in mass. Claims, whether direct or indirect, that mass loss can be achieved by any other means are not acceptable in advertisements addressed to the general public.
- 2.1.4 Temporary mass loss can be achieved by the expulsion of water from the body. This may not be represented in advertisements as a method of slimming.
- 2.1.5 Overmass in young people is sometimes associated with a defective action of the glands and it is, therefore, desirable that they should be advised to consult their doctors before embarking upon a slimming diet.
- 2.1.6 Obesity is a condition requiring medical attention and treatment. No claims referring to obesity are admissible in advertisements directed to the general public.

2.2 *Diet plans*

- 2.2.1 Evidence will be required from the advertiser to show that his suggested diet(s) will provide adequate amounts of proteins, vitamins and minerals, and that the diet is capable of achieving the results claimed for it, when followed by the kind of person for whom it is intended.
- 2.2.2 No claim, direct or indirect, should be made in any advertisement for a diet that it contains any ingredient which in itself has the property of hastening the process of mass loss.

All foods have some kilojoule count and in a balanced diet it will be necessary to have foods with higher and lower kilojoule levels. There are no grounds for supposing

that specific foods have particular properties which speed up the metabolic processes which cause excess fat to be “burnt-up” and thus mass to be lost.

2.2.3 Advertisements for “crash” diets are unacceptable.

2.3 ***Aids to dieting: General***

2.3.1 Diet aids, such as foods, food substitutes or appetite depressants, may not be advertised except in terms which make clear they can only be effective when taken in conjunction with or as part of a kilojoule-controlled diet. Due prominence should be given, therefore, in all advertisements to the part played by the diet.

2.3.2 Any diets provided in conjunction with diet aids, whether on pack, in advertisements or otherwise, will be required to conform to the advice given above on diet plans, and details of the diets proposed should therefore be enclosed, with appropriate substantiation, when clearance of advertising is being sought.

2.3.3 Advertisements for diet aids should also conform to the advice given above as to the non-acceptability of certain claims for the individual effectiveness of specific foods or other diet ingredients.

2.4 ***Foods***

2.4.1 Advertisements for foods offered as diet aids should make clear in what way they contribute to the diet, eg whether the particular food is lower in kilojoules than its conventional equivalent on a mass for mass basis, or a slice for slice basis.

2.4.2 Particular care should be taken to ensure that advertisements for meal substitutes do not imply that these products are effective if eaten in addition to normal meals rather than instead of them.

2.5 ***Appetite depressants***

2.5.1 Advertisements for appetite depressants should make clear how they work and will only be regarded as acceptable when adequate evidence has been provided by advertisers that the product is safe and effective at the level of consumption suggested.

2.5.2 Claims for the effect of appetite depressants should not be expressed in terms of food equivalent, e.g. equal to two eggs and ham.

