

# Sample Media Warning Letters



Office of the Director  
Bureau of Consumer Protection

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20580

TO: Publisher

RE: Weight Loss Advertising in Your Publication

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive weight loss advertisement.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the nation's consumer protection agency. The FTC and the law enforcement partners on the attached list read your publication as part of a review of advertising directed to Spanish-speaking consumers. This review is one component of the FTC's Hispanic Outreach and Law Enforcement Initiative, which aims to detect, stop, and prevent consumer fraud against Hispanics. To achieve these goals, the FTC continues actively to monitor Spanish-language media and to bring law enforcement actions against marketers whose ads include deceptive claims. For information about these actions, please refer to the FTC's website at [http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases\\_health.htm](http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/ojo/cases_health.htm).

The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads. Under the FTC Act, weight loss claims, such as those disseminated in your publication, must be truthful and not misleading. They also must be supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence. In other words, it is unlawful for a marketer to make weight loss claims without scientific support at the time they made the claims.

The FTC has published a reference guide to help media outlets screen out weight-loss product ads that contain false claims. This guide, *Red Flag Bogus Weight Loss Claims*, is available at <http://www.ftc.gov/redflag/>. (In Spanish at <http://www.ftc.gov/redflag/espanol/index.html>.) Specifically, media outlets should "red flag" claims that a product:

- Causes weight loss of two pounds or more a week for a month or more without dieting or exercise;
- Causes substantial weight loss, no matter what or how much the consumer eats;
- Causes permanent weight loss (even when the consumer stops using the product);
- Blocks the absorption of fat or calories to enable consumers to lose substantial weight;





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TO: Media Outlet

RE: Weight Loss Advertising on Your Network or Station

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TO: Media Outlet

RE: Health-Related Advertising on Your Network or Station

DATE: September 27, 2006

This letter is to advise you that you have run at least one potentially deceptive health-related advertisement.

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The FTC also provides the media with guidance on how to spot facially deceptive ads. Under the FTC Act, health-related claims, such as those disseminated in your publication, must be truthful and not misleading. They also must be supported by competent and reliable scientific evidence. In other words, it is unlawful for a marketer to make health-related claims without scientific support at the time they made the claims.

Health scams harm consumers in your community and hurt the credibility of your organization and your legitimate advertisers. We know that no media outlet wants to mislead its audience by knowingly running deceptive disease cure claims. We hope this notification and the referenced materials will help your staff identify and reject ads that contain suspicious health-related claims in the future. For example, please "red flag" ads that:

- claim a product is a quick and effective cure-all or diagnostic tool for a wide variety of ailments;
- claim a product can treat or cure diseases, such as diabetes, heart disease, or cancer; or
- use words like "scientific breakthrough," "miraculous cure," "exclusive product," "secret ingredient," or "ancient remedy."





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