

ENDING THE ALLURE OF DRUG ADVERTISING

Protecting Patients and Reducing Wasteful Spending

People singing and dancing. Fields of colorful flowers gently blowing in the breeze. Smiling faces, peppy music and backyard barbecues. Turn on your television today and you just might find yourself wondering: How can I get that happy, snappy feeling? The answer is clear: buy a drug, preferably an expensive, brand-name prescription. No mention of generics; just the priciest brand names on the market.

Only the United States and New Zealand allow drugmakers to advertise directly to consumers. Intended to raise health literacy, direct-to-consumer (DTC) drug advertising across all media is now ubiquitous and presents a skewed picture of medication benefits and risks. In the U.S., the top ten manufacturers spent nearly \$14 billion on DTC advertising [in 2023 alone](#).¹ Patients should receive the medications they need; not chase after an image they see on screen.

ACHP urges policymakers to:

1. Ban drugmakers from advertising directly to consumers.

DTC drug ads push patients toward pricey therapies they may not even need. Consumers were bombarded with \$500 million in DTC ads for Humira in 2019, ultimately contributing to \$2.4 billion in Medicare costs.

2. Require manufacturers to list the Wholesale Acquisition Cost, or manufacturer list price, of drugs in all advertisements.

Consumers may only see their out-of-pocket costs, but they deserve transparency on the exorbitant costs that manufacturers charge. Those prices get passed on and can result in higher premiums for everyone.

3. End tax breaks for DTC drug advertising costs.

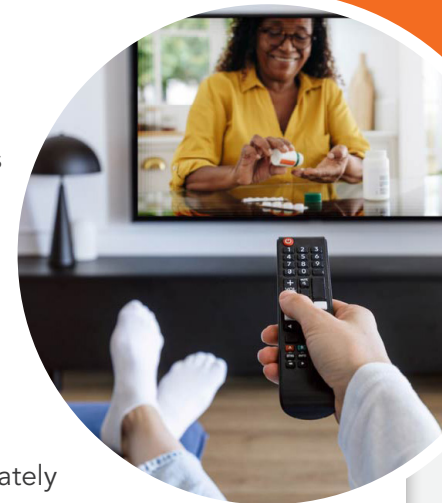
Currently, manufacturers do not pay taxes for expenses associated with DTC advertising. Banning tax deductions for DTC drug ads could save an astounding \$137 billion from 2026 to 2035.

4. Empower the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to increase oversight over DTC drug advertising costs.

The FDA's voluntary weak oversight of drug ads has led to misleading promotions, higher prescription costs and inappropriate prescribing. Americans need an advocate to make sense of the confusion on the airwaves.

Curbing DTC drug ad dominance is critical for patients to access affordable, necessary medications, rather than being swayed by misleading marketing tactics. We must protect public health, reduce unnecessary spending and shift the focus back to what truly benefits patients—safe, effective and affordable treatments.

1. "CSRxP Analysis Finds Big Pharma's Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) Advertising Costs U.S. Taxpayers Billions of Dollars" CSRxP, March 18, 2025. <https://achp.pub/CSRXP-DTC-Analysis>



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