

## Ad regulator issues covid-19 advisory

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**NEW DELHI:** India's advertising watchdog has cracked the whip on misleading ads for products that claim to fight covid-19, with a series of advisories.

Advertisers of Ayurvedic, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy products and services have been told to abide by the order of the ministry of AYUSH dated 1 April on coronavirus ads that restricts companies from making any false claims.

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) said that ads should also avoid claiming to kill or remove any other virus as this too will be in violation of the ASCI code.

In case advertisers choose to claim removal of other viruses, they should include a disclaimer that "claim not applicable to coronavirus (covid-19)". The disclaimer size and position should be in line with ASCI guidelines.

Advertisers were advised to be particularly careful while making direct or indirect claims to reducing the chances of infection with coronavirus or gain immunity against it.

It said companies should be able to substantiate claims of immunity against or treatment for coronavirus with technical support recognized or approved by health authorities such as WHO, ICMR, MoHFW, AYUSH, DCGI, CDC (USA), or health organizations of similar stature or by well recognized medical/technical literature or by regulatory approved clinical research conducted by a recognized medical institute/laboratory.

Products that are not internally consumed or applied in the body, therefore not required to be licensed under the Drug & Cosmetic Act, should be particularly cautious while making such claims unless they have claim-support data.

"We want advertisers to be more mindful in creating ads and making claims related to covid-19. Brands have also responded to consumer needs arising out of the pandemic. However, we want these products and ads to stick to claims and promises that are backed by adequate substantiation. The advisory to advertisers is meant to safeguard consumers as well as to ensure the highest standards for advertising," said Manisha Kapoor, general secretary, ASCI.