



TV drug ads should list FDA hotline, lawmakers say

The information would allow consumers to report serious side effects from prescription medication

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WASHINGTON — Citing a new Consumer Reports poll, two members of Congress urged the Food and Drug Administration to require television drug advertisements to list a toll-free number for reporting serious side effects.

The poll found that 16% of respondents who had taken a prescription drug had experienced a side effect that was serious enough to require medical attention.

The FDA "is failing to serve its most vital supervisory responsibility," said Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-Conn.), who chairs the House subcommittee on health care.

Through a program known as MedWatch, the FDA is responsible for tracking side effects from prescription drugs and medical devices.

The poll results reflected that statistic, with 7% of respondents naming the FDA as a place where they would report a serious side effect.

Consumers Union, the nonprofit organization that publishes Consumer Reports, sent the FDA a petition last month asking for such legislation.

"We have received the petition and are in the process of reviewing it at this time," said FDA spokeswoman Lisa Kohn.

In FDA-related legislation passed last year, Congress required that contact information for the agency be included in television drug advertisements.

In the poll, television was identified as the medium where consumers were most likely to be exposed to drug advertisements.

"We're working with and pushing the FDA," said Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), who serves on a House subcommittee on health care.

In the poll, 87% of respondents supported such legislation, saying television ads should be required to contain a toll-free number for reporting serious side effects.

"Clearly, consumers want to know how to report serious drug side effects to the FDA, and they think drug manufacturers should be required to provide that information."

"What better way for the FDA to let consumers know how to report serious problems with their medications?"