RxBenefits®

The Billion-Dollar Engine Behind Your Rising Drug Spend

How advertising drives prescription trends and what HR leaders need to know



Direct-to-consumer (DTC) drug ads aren't just background noise – they're a powerful spend driver for pharmacy plans.

$14B
2023 spend by the top 10 pharma companies

$219.4M
Spent in June 2025 alone on TV ads for the top 10 drugs

$39.9M
Spent on a single ad for Wegovy during the 2025 NBA Finals

Exposure to these ads is unavoidable. They appear across:

- Streaming platforms
- Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube
- Search and display ads
- Sponsored content and influencer promotion

DTC ads are designed to increase demand, and they're working.

Members arrive at their doctor's office already convinced they need a specific drug.

The ripple effects on your benefits plan are hard to ignore.

- Increased demand for high-cost branded drugs
- Off-label prescribing that drives up costs and poses potential health risks
- Prescribing of drugs that don't offer material clinical benefits and may even be less effective





Here are five strategies to help you manage through the surge of DTC-related requests:

1. **Improve benefits literacy:** Help members understand key coverage details, such as copay tiers, exclusions, and step therapy, a plan feature that requires trying lower-cost medications first
2. **Encourage price transparency:** Direct members to pharmacy pricing tools that let them understand the cost of medications and compare options before they fill a prescription
3. **Support wellness and prevention:** Explore programs that help proactively manage or prevent chronic conditions that drive drug demand, such as obesity and diabetes
4. **Maintain consistent plan communication:** Provide ongoing education about how the pharmacy benefit works and how to get the most value from it
5. **Incentivize cost-conscious behavior:** Consider programs that reward smart prescription choices, such as using generics or selecting in-network pharmacies

You can't stop the ads, but you can work with a trusted partner to protect your plan

You need a partner who brings pharmacy expertise to the table, who can help you remove wasteful spending while increasing member outcomes and limiting member impact.

As the industry's first and leading pharmacy benefits optimizer, RxBenefits provides:

- **Independent, pharmacist-led clinical management** to deliver the right medications based on approval criteria, clinical necessity, and your plan's design
- **Formulary optimization** that removes high-cost, low-clinical-value drugs when lower-cost, clinically equivalent alternatives are available
- **Data-driven insights** based on your pharmacy utilization, so your decisions are informed by your employee dynamics and plan goals, not external ads
- **Strategic guidance** grounded in industry expertise, helping you anticipate and tackle emerging cost drivers like DTC-influenced demand

RxBenefits®

RxBenefits.com | 1-800-377-1614

Copyright © 2025 RxBenefits, Inc. All Rights Reserved.