# Investigation reveals serious safety concerns over weight-loss drugs at Boots



In a recent investigation by Channel 4's Dispatches, serious concerns have emerged surrounding the prescription of weight-loss drugs by high street pharmacy Boots. Dr Vicky Price, a senior A&E doctor at the University of Liverpool, reported alarming cases of complications in patients relating to these medications, noting that every shift seems to bring in at least one patient suffering from side effects. Dr Price stated, "It felt like every shift I would be aware of somebody in the department that would come in with a complication of a weight loss drug."

The investigation revealed that a 16-year-old undercover reporter was able to purchase weight-loss injections on two separate occasions without any rigorous age verification, despite Boots' stated policy of not prescribing to individuals under 18. According to the findings, the supermarket chain only required the reporter to provide a date of birth on an online application, which could be easily falsified. When the reporter visited a Boots store in person, she was asked to verbally confirm her date of birth, after which the medication was dispensed without further scrutiny.

Corroborating these findings, Alima Batchelor, the Head of Policy at the Pharmacists' Defence Association, commented, "You expect that there should be verification of the details given... It's disappointing." This lack of verification raises critical safety concerns, particularly given the severe side effects reported, which include erratic heart rates, high acidity levels in the blood, and potentially life-threatening conditions such as pancreatitis.

Following these revelations and in response to growing scrutiny, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPC) instituted new guidelines in mid-February 2025. These regulations mandated that pharmacies must conduct in-person consultations, either via video or through direct communication with a patient’s GP, before prescribing weight-loss drugs. However, just a week after the new rules were implemented, the undercover reporter returned to Boots, where she once again provided a false date of birth and was dispensed medication without being asked for photographic identification.

Health Secretary Wes Streeting addressed the worrying findings, stating that it is "totally unacceptable for any retailer to prescribe them without the correct medical supervision and ID and age verification." He added that healthcare regulatory bodies like the GPC should act against any non-compliance in the industry, creating a pressing environment for thorough investigations into rogue prescribing practices.

The Dispatches investigation further uncovered troubling practices among private prescribers, including nurses who, without proper checks, prescribed weight-loss injections based on minimal information provided by patients. Ellie Flynn, the reporter behind the investigation, asserted, “This has become a side hustle for medical professionals. There has been such a gold rush around these drugs and there’s unprecedented demand." As the weight-loss jabs command upward of £180 a month, the allure of profit can overshadow patient safety.

In response to the controversy arising from the investigation, Boots stated, "Patient safety is our number one priority." The pharmacy has pledged to strengthen their ID verification processes in consultation with the GPC and the Care Quality Commission. They reiterated their policy of not prescribing weight-loss drugs to those under 18, despite the findings illustrated in the Dispatches investigation.

As the scrutiny continues, the revelations serve to highlight a need for rigorous adherence to health regulations regarding potentially harmful medications. The investigation and its consequences underscore the complexities of healthcare provision, particularly concerning vulnerable populations such as minors, who may seek weight-loss solutions without understanding the associated risks.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.gbnews.com/news/weight-loss-jabs-boots-pharmacy-sell-teenagers-channel-4> - This article corroborates the investigation by Channel 4's Dispatches, revealing that Boots pharmacies sold weight-loss jabs to a 16-year-old undercover reporter without proper age verification. It highlights the lack of rigorous checks and the potential health risks associated with these medications.
* <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2025/03/04/boots-weight-loss-jab-wegovy-prescription-teenager-no-id/> - This article supports the claim that Boots prescribed weight-loss jabs to a teenager without requiring ID, despite their policy against prescribing to minors. It emphasizes the safety concerns and regulatory issues surrounding such practices.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the original context for the article, detailing concerns about weight-loss drug prescriptions and the need for stricter regulations to ensure patient safety, especially among minors.
* <https://www.channel4.com/programmes/dispatches> - This is the platform where the Dispatches investigation was broadcast, highlighting the issues with weight-loss drug prescriptions and the lack of proper verification processes in pharmacies like Boots.
* <https://www.pharmacistsdefence.org> - This organization is associated with Alima Batchelor, who expressed disappointment over the lack of verification in pharmacy prescriptions, emphasizing the need for stricter safety measures.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/general-pharmaceutical-council> - This is the website of the General Pharmaceutical Council, which has been involved in setting new guidelines for pharmacies to ensure proper consultations and verification before prescribing weight-loss drugs.