

PRESS RELEASE

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Target consumer protection inspection launched to protect vulnerable consumers – focus on products promising misleading medicinal effects

The National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection (NATCP) in cooperation with the government agencies under its professional supervision, has launched a comprehensive investigation to prevent unfair trade practices targeting vulnerable consumer groups. The inspections cover treatments disguised as healthcare services for the benefit of the elderly, in addition to the protection of children, as well as products targeting families caring for children with disabilities and special educational needs, which in many cases make false claims.

The protection of vulnerable consumers is one of the key objectives of consumer protection, given that commercial practices affecting them can be particularly misleading, exploiting their vulnerable position. The consumer protection authority has previously investigated misleading products promising medicinal effects that target vulnerable consumers. At the same time, especially online, there are still countless products available that promise instant healing, whether they are mineral bracelets or various "medicinal mushroom" teas.

In addition to the products, various treatments are also advertised in a misleading manner, such as general health assessments based on brain wave tests, or even complete health checks available for a few thousand forints. According to the experience of the consumer protection authority, however, these treatments are usually performed by unqualified persons who, after a devastating assessment of the patient's condition, try to persuade them, mainly elderly people, to purchase medicinal products. In addition to financial damage, this deception can also have serious health consequences, as consumers who are actually ill may fail to seek the necessary medical treatment, trusting in cheap products that promise quick results but have no actual therapeutic effect. There are also frequent cases where certain products are advertised using the image of a well-known person, such as a doctor, thereby inspiring confidence in the deceived consumer.

All of the above justify decisive action by the consumer protection authority in the interests of vulnerable consumers. Vulnerable consumer groups include consumers who are particularly vulnerable due to their age (including both children and the elderly), consumers who are particularly vulnerable due to their credulity (including, among others, consumers who are vulnerable due to their health condition or illness), and consumers who are particularly vulnerable due to their mental or physical disability.

The inspections cover mineral bracelets promising healing, general health assessments based on brain wave tests, and various "medicinal mushroom" teas. The authority's staff also examine products related to health improvement, "treatments" disguised as health services, and products promising healing effects, such as dietary supplements and potency enhancers. They also check products aimed at families caring for children with disabilities or special educational needs, which in many cases make false claims, including C-peptides that cure autism, CBD oils, and gummy candies that promise to cure ADHD.

The inspections also cover products that misleadingly and unjustifiably use well-known personalities to advertise the product in their name and thus try to establish trust in the product.

In line with the 7-point consumer protection action plan announced last fall, investigations are ongoing to protect vulnerable consumer groups.

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National Authority for Trade and Consumer Protection