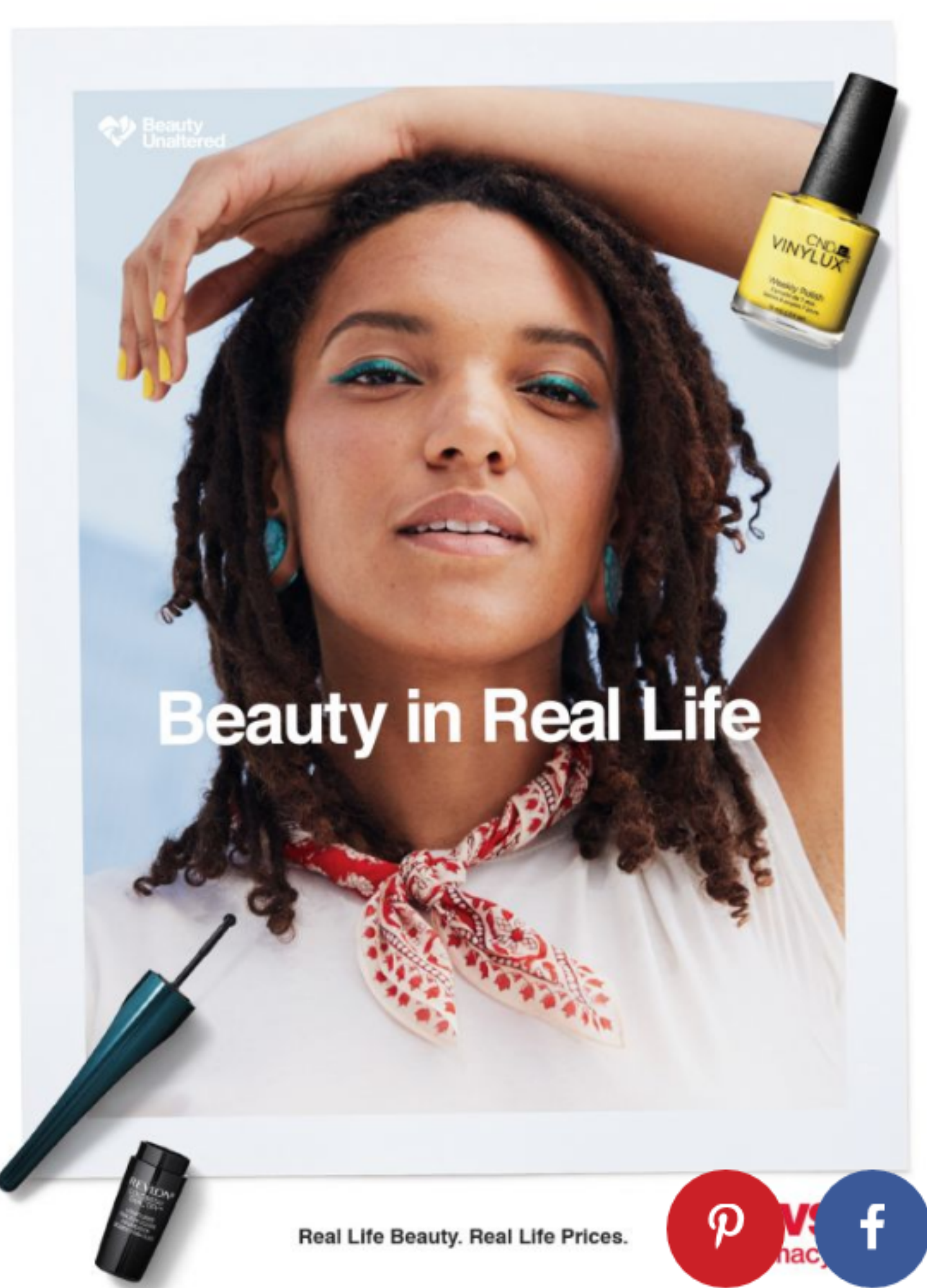


CVS Is Making A *Huge* Change That Will Impact All Of Its Beauty Brands

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Update: True to its promise earlier this year, CVS has officially unveiled the first photos from its trailblazing, completely Photoshop-free beauty campaign. Going forward, the retailer's advertising imagery will feature the "CVS Beauty Mark" to indicate that it has not been digitally altered. Now when you're shopping for lipstick or sunscreen, you can rest assured knowing maybe — just maybe! — you'll see someone who looks a little more like you.

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Before the mindfuck that is Facebook showing you a tube of [Laura Mercier](#) mascara 20 minutes after you *thought* about it existing, beauty advertisements were a little more... subliminal. Since the very first ad of its kind, in

which Woodbury Soap promised to deliver "[the skin you love to touch](#)" in 1911, images have been tweaked and retouched to sell a dream — of hair that's never seen a flyaway, skin with noticeably fewer pores than the [20,000 on the average person's face](#), or lipstick that looks sexy even post-makeout.

And, sadly, that expectation of "perfection" is still true of many advertisements today — whether they're crafted by a team of marketers or an Instagram influencer using FaceTune. It's unrealistic, harmful, and plays into antiquated and exclusive notions of what beauty should look like. Which is why [drugstore behemoth CVS](#) is making a change starting in April, committing to a new set of strict, no-Photoshop guidelines for any of its internal beauty imagery in stores, on its website, in marketing materials, emails, or social media accounts — and asking external vendors to include disclaimers on theirs.

"There is a clear connection between unrealistic body images and negative health effects, especially in girls and young women, so we will be focused on implementing the guidelines as it relates to physical appearances," president of CVS Pharmacy Helena Foulkes tells *Refinery29*. "That means CVS will not alter a person's shape, size, proportion, skin, or eye color, as well as other individual characteristics like enhancing or altering lines and wrinkles. We hope that this effort will encourage authenticity and transparency so that beauty is something that always makes women feel good, and never not good *enough*."

While a handful of other brands, like [Aerie](#), [Missguided](#), and [Glossier](#), have made similar commitments, the move marks the first time a major drugstore retailer has taken steps toward a completely Photoshop-free mission. Here's what this means: Come April, all CVS-owned images will contain a "Beauty Mark" watermark to help customers identify what images have been un-retouched. Brands that sell at CVS and decide to alter their own imagery will be required to include a disclaimer on all their in-store and online ads.

"Beauty can be and should be aspirational, but I believe that can still be achieved without materially altering how a person, model, or celebrity looks," Foulkes says. "As a company that is committed, above all else, to the health and well-being of its customers, we have an opportunity to start a conversation that can lead to positive change."



COURTESY OF CVS.

A big reason for the shift, Foulkes says, is to put mental health first — especially because [so much of what influences young people](#) is through advertisements and social media, which fuels our intrinsic habit of comparing ourselves to others. "We can't help but be influenced when we are constantly bombarded by images of physical perfection — some influence is inescapable," says [clinical psychotherapist Matthew Traube](#), MFT. "If we receive the message that we must look a certain way to succeed, even if it's unrealistic, it shapes our views of what success looks like. Feeling unable to succeed can create hopelessness, which can lead to reduced self-esteem, body image issues, and self-critical thinking."

Traube suggests this has been a standard in the industry for so long because, unfortunately, this notion of "perfection" sells. But here's the thing about perfection: It's not real — and that's a good thing. What is real? [Teenagers experiencing acne](#). [Women getting wrinkles](#). [Pores](#). "We avoid facing our humanness by looking for idealized versions of ourselves," Traube says. "Seeing acne on a billboard can initially feel more difficult, but it is real. It's a natural tendency to avoid what feels uncomfortable, but by safely and slowly leaning into discomfort, we can take the teeth out of what we find psychologically threatening. That is how we heal."

Change doesn't happen overnight — but that's how progress works, and we're grateful to see a drugstore giant trying to use its power for good.