

SNAPSHOT OF MEDICATION USE IN THE U.S.

**Research Conducted by
International Communications Research for
The American Society of Health-System Pharmacists**

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**ASHP Snapshot of Medication Use in the U.S.
Research Report**

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I. INTRODUCTION

To better understand the medications Americans are taking, the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) recently sponsored a national survey among a representative sample of American adults. International Communications Research conducted the survey with 1,000 respondents from September 24 through 25, 2000. Survey methodology is presented on page five of this report.

Because ASHP's mission is to help pharmacists help patients make the best use of their medications, the results of this survey will provide a better understanding of the medications consumers are taking. This understanding will assist ASHP in developing future education initiatives to properly address their needs.

II. KEY FINDINGS

General Medication Use

Over half (51.1%) of respondents reported taking two or more medications (prescription, non-prescription and/or vitamins and herbal supplements) each day.

Prescription Medications

Daily Use

Nearly one half (45%) reported taking at least one prescription medication each day, while more than a quarter (28%) take multiple prescription medications daily. Rates were highest among older respondents. Only 28 percent of those 44 years or younger compared with those 45-54 (50%), 55-64 (63%) and 65 plus (79%).

Weekly Use

Nearly half (46%) the respondents reported taking an average of 2.98 prescription medications in the past week. Rates were highest among older respondents. Only 33 percent of those 44 years or younger took prescription medications in the past week compared with those 45-54 (52%), 55-64 (62%), and 65 plus (78%).

Women vs. Men

According to the survey, 55.2% of women reported taking a prescription medication in the past week compared to 37.1% of men.

Household Income

Respondents from households with the lowest income were more likely to have taken a prescription medication in the past week.

- Under \$15,000 60.4%
- \$15,000-\$24,999 37.2%
- \$25,000-\$39,999 44.4%
- \$40,000-\$49,999 47.1%
- \$50,000+ 46.4%

Race

All of those surveyed, 48.9% of whites and 37.6% of African-Americans reported using a prescription medication in the last week.

Non-Prescription Medications

Daily Use

One third (30%) of respondents reported taking an average of 1.78 non-prescription medications on a daily basis in the past week.

Weekly Use

Nearly two thirds (58%) of respondents reported taking an average of 2.11 non-prescription medications in the past week.

Women vs. Men

Of respondent who reported taking a non-prescription medication in the past week, frequency was higher among females than males (64% vs. 50%).

Race

Sixty-one percent of white respondents compared to 41% African-American respondents reported taking a non-prescription medication in the past week.

Age

Older Americans are more likely than other age groups to take an over the counter drug on a daily basis:

- 18-34 16.1%
- 35-44 17.7%
- 45-54 18.3%
- 55-64 22.8%
- 65+ 23.1%

Herbal Supplements/Vitamins

Daily Use

Over one third (40%) reported taking an average of 2.31 herbal supplements or vitamins on a daily basis during the past week.

Weekly Use

One third (39%) of respondents reported taking an average of 3.73 herbal supplements or vitamins in the past week. Along the same lines, over one third (40%) reported taking an average of 2.31 herbal supplements or vitamins on a daily basis during the past week.

Women vs. Men

Women were more likely than men to report taking herbal supplements or vitamins in the past week (45% vs. 33%).

Race

Whites were more likely than African-Americans to take herbal supplements or vitamins on a daily basis (42.7% vs. 26.4%).

Environment

Urban dwellers (41.8%) were more likely than rural dwellers (34.3%) to use herbal supplements and vitamins on a daily basis.

Reasons for Taking Prescription Medications

Among the 75 percent reporting use of a prescription medication in the past week, most (61%) were to treat a long-term health condition. This reflects the higher prescription usage among the older respondents: 45-54 (68%), 55-64 (81%), and 65 plus (86%).

Other reasons for using prescription medications included treatment for periodically recurring health problem (24%) or for a short-term acute health condition (10%).

How People Report What Medications They Are Taking During Hospital Intake

When entering a hospital, 78 percent inform hospital personnel about the medications they are currently taking. Most do this by telling a doctor or nurse (39%) or both (18%). Other means of reporting their current medication use are to write it down on a form (18%) or to bring their medications with them (3%). Nearly one tenth (8%) don't report their medication use in any form, while 9 percent said they don't go to the hospital and 4 percent said they don't take any medications.

65+ FINDINGS

The findings below represent only the 301 respondents who were 65 years old or older.

Prescription Medications

The vast majority (80%) reported taking an average of 2.9 prescription medications in the past week. All of these reported taking these medications on a daily basis.

Non-Prescription Medications

Over half (58%) of respondents 65 plus reported taking an average of 1.38 non-prescription medications in the past week. Of these, 45 percent reported taking at least one non-prescription medication on a daily basis.

Herbal Supplements/Vitamins

Nearly half (46%) of respondents 65 plus reported taking an average of 1.72 herbal supplements or vitamins in the past week. All of these reported taking these supplements or vitamins on a daily basis.

Reasons for Taking Prescription Medications

Nearly all (86%) use of prescription medications among respondents 65 plus was for a long-term health condition. Other reasons included treatment for periodically recurring health problem (20%) or for a short-term acute health condition (6%).

How People Report What Medications They're Taking During Hospital Intake

When entering a hospital, 81 percent inform hospital personnel about the medications they are currently taking. Most do this by telling a doctor or nurse (38%) or both (10%). One quarter (23%) write the information down on a form and one tenth (9%) bring their medications with them. Five percent don't usually report this information. Of the remainder, two percent report taking no prescription medications and 12 percent say they do not go the hospital.

III. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Sample Design: This survey was conducted for ASHP by telephone September 24 through September 25, 2000 with 1,000 American adults age 18 or older. The sample is based on methodology designed to produce a representative sample of the U.S. population. This representative sample makes use of random-digit selection procedures that assure sample representation of persons in households that are “listed” in telephone directories, as well as persons in households that are “unlisted” in telephone directories. Within each sample household, one adult respondent is randomly selected using a computerized procedure based on the “most recent birthday method” of respondent selection. The respondents in this survey also included 301 individuals 65 years old and older. Since these individuals typically have more health conditions and take more medicine, their responses have been reported in a separate section. Due to the small sample size, however, it is not possible to assess demographic differences with a sufficient degree of confidence.

Weighting: The data were weighted to the Census Bureau’s latest population parameters on region, education, sex, race and age to provide nationally representative estimates of the adult population 18 years of age and older.

Margin of Error: Sampling of error is defined as the difference between the results obtained from the sample and those that would have been obtained had the entire population been surveyed. The sampling error for the total sample of this survey (n=1,000) is plus or minus 3 percentage points. Please note that when comparing smaller subgroups, such as respondents divided by age or gender categories, the margin of error increases.

IV. SURVEY QUESTIONS

Medication Snapshot Survey

Conducted September 24-25, 2000
N=1,000

Please note that totals may not equal 100% due to rounding

1. How many different non-prescription medications have you taken in the past week, such as aspirin, Advil, Tylenol or cough syrup?

None	41.6%
1	31.4%
2	14.2%
3	3.5%
4	2.6%
5	0.6%
6	0.9%
7	1.8%
8	0.5%
9	0
10 or more	2.3%
Don't Know/Refused	0.8%

2. How many different non-prescription medications do you regularly take each day, such as aspirin, Advil, Tylenol or cough syrup?

None	69.9%
1	18.7%
2	6.9%
3	1.0%
4	0.6%
5	1.3%
6	0.5%
7	0.2%
8	0
9	0
10 or more	0.4%
Don't Know/Refused	0.3%

3. How many different vitamins, mineral or herbal supplements, such as St. John's Wort or Ginkgo Biloba, have you taken in the past week?

None	59.4%
1	14.3%
2	6.2%
3	2.8%
4	1.5%
5	2.1%
6	1.0%
7	4.9%
8	0
9	0.1%
10 or more	6.3%
Don't Know/Refused	1.3%

4. How many different vitamins, mineral or herbal supplements, such as St. John's Wort or Ginkgo Biloba, do you regularly take each day?

None	58.9%
1	22.0%
2	7.2%
3	3.6%
4	2.2%
5	1.3%
6	1.1%
7	0.7%
8	0.2%
9	0.2%
10 or more	1.7%
Don't Know/Refused	0.9%

The next few questions are about prescription medications only.

5. How many different prescription medications have you taken in the last week?

None	52.3%
1	15.8%
2	9.5%
3	6.9%
4	3.3%
5	2.4%
6	2.4%
7	1.6%
8	0.7%
9	0.8%
10 or more	3.1%
Don't Know/Refused	1.1%

6. How many different prescription medications do you regularly take each day?

None	54.6%
1	16.1%
2	9.8%
3	6.2%
4	35.%
5	2.6%
6	2.4%
7	1.0%
8	0.9%
9	0.7%
10 or more	1.2%
Don't Know/Refused	0.9%

7. Which of the following describes the prescription medications you took in the past week?

For long-term treatment	61.3%
Periodically for recurring problem	24.1%
Short-term treatment	10.0%

8. When you go to the hospital, how do you report what medications you are taking?

Tell a doctor or nurse	39.4%
Tell both a doctor and nurse	18.3%
Write it down on a form	17.6%
Bring medications with you	2.8%
Do not usually report information	7.7%
Do not take any medications	4.1%
Do not go to the hospital	9.3%
Don't Know/Refused	0.6%

* Combination of responses to questions 2,4 and 6

Total Respondents

Amount of Medications	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Population
0	604	30.8%
1	352	18%
2	279	14.2%
3	165	8.4%
4	142	7.2%
5	98	5.0%
6	54	2.8%
7	56	2.9%
8	56	2.8%
9	40	2.1%
10 or more	112	5.7%