



National Prescribing Service Limited

5th National Consumer Survey: Executive Summary

This survey is the fifth in a series of surveys commissioned by National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) as part of its commitment to evidence-based practice in prescription behaviour. The main purpose of earlier surveys has been to identify:

- the sources of information used by consumers about prescription medicine, and
- attitudes towards the use of antibiotics for coughs, colds and flu-like symptoms

In addition, the 2003 and current surveys collected data that will be used to evaluate changes in knowledge, attitudes, awareness and behaviour since the beginning of the NPS Community QUM Program. Repetition of this survey in later years will provide data from which NPS will be able to measure campaign effectiveness.

A national telephone survey of 1 200 respondents aged 15 years and over was conducted. The survey data was weighted in line with ABS population profiles.

Overall health of the population

- Overall the population sampled rated themselves as healthy. Eighty-four percent of respondents considered their health to be 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good' (compared to 82% in 2003).
- Nearly half (42%) of all respondents reported chronic health conditions that have lasted or are likely to last longer than 6 months. As would be expected this is higher for older Australians with 57% aged over 50 stating they have a chronic condition.

Medicine use

- Nearly two in five respondents (39%; 37% in 2003) of respondents reported regular use of prescription medication in the last 12 months.
- Non-prescription medication usage in the last 12 months was similar to prescription medicine, 33% of respondents report regular use of non-prescription medication (30% in 2003).
- Use of both prescription and non-prescription medicine is slightly higher for women than men.

Management of health and wellbeing

- Eighty five percent of respondents rated their control of their health and wellbeing as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent', similar to the level in 2003 (84%). They also believe their current management of medicines, both prescription and non-prescription is good. Eighty-nine percent rated themselves as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' in terms of managing both their prescription and non-prescription medicines and this was identical to the 2003 survey.
- Women are more likely to rate their management and control of their health and wellbeing higher than men. The group with the lowest rating was young males aged 15–24 years.
- Although nine out of ten people in the population sampled rated their management and control as 'high', only four out of ten agreed that taking medicine was easier than a change in lifestyle. Less than half (45%) agreed with the statement that they "often ask my [their] doctor about alternatives to taking medicine".

Knowledge about medicines usage

- While 90% of those asked believed they manage their medicines well, some gaps in knowledge appear evident.
- When asked about their last prescription medicine most (80%) said they knew how to store the medicine (as in 2003), but less (64%) knew the possible side effects (66% in 2003), and only half knew what to do if they missed a dose or took too much (54%; 52% in 2003). A similar low proportion knew whether the medicine interacted with other medicines (53%; 49% in 2003).

Consumer information channels

- Consumers are most likely to ask a doctor (87%; 88% in 2003) or a pharmacist (78%; 80% in 2003) if they needed information about health or medicines.
- Around two in five (39%; 44% in 2003) of respondents were likely to look up a medical book or ask family or friends if they needed some information about medicines.
- Telephoning an organisation or advice line was the least likely option (16%; 17% in 2003).
- Forty-one percent (43% in 2003) of respondents indicated that they would be likely to use the Internet if they needed information about health or medicines.

Key tracking measures

The QUM campaign aims to encourage consumers to:

- recognise the medical profession as the preferred source to provide trustworthy and complete information
- ask doctors questions
- request and use Consumer Medicine Information leaflets, and NPS *Medimate*
- seek non drug alternatives or lifestyle changes as part of treatment
- utilise Medication Reviews as an option for medicine control, and
- recognise the Medicines Line, HealthInsite and the NPS as reliable sources of information.

The following tables summarise some of the key measures over time.

Resource	Awareness of resources by the community (% of respondents)	
	2003	2004
Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)	24	26
HealthInsite	13	12
Medicines Line	15	16
Medication reviews	31	32

Resource	Use of resources by the community (% of respondents)	
	2003	2004
Consumer Medicine Information (CMI)	13	18
Medicines Line	<2	<2
Medication reviews	9	9

Source of information	Trustworthiness of information (% 'good' or 'very good')	
	2003	2004
Doctors	84	83
Pharmacists	85	85
Specialists (eg cardiologist, endocrinologist, etc)	83	83
HealthInsite*	47	49
MedicineLine*	49	61
NPS*	47	56

* % of those respondents who indicated they were aware of the source.

Source of information	Completeness of information (% 'good' or 'very good')	
	2003	2004
Doctors	75	74
Pharmacists	80	80
Specialists (eg cardiologist, endocrinologist, etc)	76	76
HealthInsite*	43	45
MedicineLine*	39	55
NPS*	39	50

* % of those respondents who indicated they were aware of the source.

Behaviour	1999 (% yes)	2000 (% yes)	2001 (% yes)	2003 (% yes)	2004 (% yes)
Asked doctor questions about last new prescription medicine	48	53	48	57	58
Asked pharmacist questions about last new prescription medicine	16	18	15	27	30
Interested in having or had a Medication Review	–	–	–	26	25
Requested Consumer Medicine Information	–	–	–	2	3

Behaviour last cough, cold or flu	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)	2003 (%)	2004 (%)
Used OTC	68	69	69	71	70
Rested at home	57	54	54	61	58
Asked pharmacist for advice	20	21	22	22	22
Visited a doctor	23	22	19	20	18
Feel it's nearly always appropriate to use antibiotics to treat cough or cold	4	4	3	3	3
Feel it's usually appropriate to use antibiotics to treat cough or cold	21	21	19	19	18
Feel it's nearly always appropriate to use antibiotics to treat flu	8	7	6	4	5
Feel it's usually appropriate to use antibiotics to treat flu	27	30	27	28	29
Used antibiotics last cough, cold or flu	11	10	10	9	7