

HOW DO THE FRENCH PEOPLE VIEW SELF-MÉDICATION ?

Afipa aims to better understand the French people's behaviour regarding self-medication. The Federation has therefore conducted a large-scale survey with the Harris Interactive research institute, covering 1 000 people.

How do the French people define self-medication ? What do they expect ? How do they self-medicate ? What are the future trends ? Such questions are answered by the survey.

WHAT DOES SELF-MEDICATION MEAN FOR THE FRENCH PEOPLE ?

When questioned, the French people give a **very broad definition of self-medication practice** ; in particular, it covers alternative medicine, medical devices and vitamins. The French view of self-medication is therefore not limited to medicine with an optional medical prescription.¹

Another learning of this survey : **69% of the French people consider that they self-medicate when they take medicine based on a former prescription.** Afipa considers this as a major point of vigilance. Promoting the proper use of self-medication must occur within an active prevention policy supported by all stakeholders : authorities, healthcare professionals, patient associations and industrial companies.

In the absence of public initiative to provide information regarding self-medication, Afipa conducted two general public awareness campaigns in 2016 and 2017.

These educational initiatives provided positive, pedagogical communication about this matter which impacts day-to-day healthcare.

Nevertheless, **the French people remain cautious. They are fully aware of the fact that self-medication is only applicable to certain diseases** : patients most commonly self-medicate when they suffer from headaches (46%), flu-like symptoms (51%) and sore throats (41%).

The respondents to the survey self-medicate because the medication is easy to obtain (78% of the answers), easy to take (58%) and efficient (57%).

In addition, 51% of the French people consider that self-medication enables them to save time and 43% believe that self-medication contributes to reducing public healthcare spendings.

HOW DO THE FRENCH PEOPLE SELF-MEDICATE ?

80% of the French people self-medicated in 2018 : 85% of the women and 75% of the men who responded to the Harris interactive survey purchased self-medication products. This practice has been stable for several years and is **very seasonal** : 79% in winter, 40% in spring and 49% in summer.

¹ According to Afipa, responsible self-medication is the possibility for individuals to deal with their illness by taking self-medication medicine which is authorized, over-the-counter or with an optional medical prescription (OMP), safe and efficient in the use conditions indicated, with pharmacist advice (World Health Organization definition, year 2000).

The French people therefore self-medicate when they feel the need to do so, and in a responsible way : 46% self-medicate for minor health issues and 44% for conditions which they are familiar with, and they do so mainly when the symptoms appear (43%) or a few days later (39%).

To obtain information, the French people mainly rely on the people around them (63%) and on specialized healthcare websites (43%). They are specifically interested in information regarding adverse side effects (61%) and possible interactions (52%). These results confirm that it is more than ever **necessary to launch a public awareness campaign on self-medication, as Afipa has been requesting for many years.**

The pharmacist's key role is confirmed by this survey. 59% of the French people trust their pharmacist to advise them on the medicine best suited to their need, and less than 10% never ask their pharmacist for advice. Most of the survey respondents give a score of nearly 8/10 to their pharmacist's advice, which they request mainly to confirm a choice (58%) and to compensate for a lack of medical knowledge (45%).

What budget is allocated to self-medication ? Today, the French people spend on average 35€ per year; but one third of them would be willing to spend 10 to 19€ per month on self-medication.

WHAT FUTURE IS THERE FOR SELF-MEDICATION ?

Regarding the future, **22% of the French people plan to increase their use of self-medication.**

As shown by this survey, **the French people clearly indicate that they need information** on self-medication matters ; in particular, they are asking for more education regarding healthcare issues (41%), the creation of an official website for self-medication products (39%) or pathology advice-cards (32%). The current lack of information results in opposing views regarding the self-medication offer : 16% of the respondents consider that too many healthcare issues are covered by self-medication, versus not enough for 13% of them.

Expectations regarding digital aspects remain limited : only 49% of the French people consider that self-medication should include a digital offer and 49% of the French people do not want artificial intelligence to be used in their medical follow-up. In spite of the digitalization of our environment, healthcare professionals remain the reference : pharmacists (for 91% of the respondents), general practitioners (for 88%) and nurses (for 81 to 85%) will play an identical or perhaps even more important role in the use of self-medication in the future. It is to be noted that the pharmacy remains the reference point : 56% for safety, 47% for the quality of the products proposed and 50% because the pharmacist's advice is essential.

The results of this survey confirm the observations made during the Self-Medication Universities, during which all stakeholders agreed on **the importance of self-medication in the healthcare system, the pharmacist's key role in supporting patients and the need to increase pedagogical communication for the general public.**

« To develop responsible self-medication, continued support must be provided to patients alongside the healthcare professionals. The general practitioner, the nurse, the pharmacist, the physiotherapist... All healthcare players have a major role to play » insists Christophe de la Fouchardière, President of Afipa.

Afipa is the professional federation representing the industrial companies which produce and commercialise healthcare products available over the counter in pharmacies (self-medication medicine, medical devices and food supplements).

Consult Afipa on :

www.afipa.org

www.masantemonchoix.org

Twitter: @afipa

Self-medication is the possibility for individuals to deal with their illness by taking self-medication medicine which is authorized, over-the-counter, safe and efficient in the use conditions indicated, with pharmacist advice (World Health Organization definition, year 2000).

PRESS CONTACTS

Thibault MOTTE

01 56 77 16 18 : thibault.motte@afipa.org

Fiona SALA

01 53 32 28 53 - sala@vianova-rp.com