

NEWS RELEASE

Self-Care strategy is vital to preventing and managing chronic disease

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The declaration signed by Canada today at the UN high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases underlines once again how important a sound self-care strategy is to the health and wellbeing of Canadians. Consumer Health Products Canada encourages all health policy makers to make a top priority of supporting responsible self-care for the benefits it offers to the health of Canadians and the sustainability of their health care system.

Chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease cost the Canadian economy \$190 billion annually and by 2030 are expected to contribute to 75 per cent of all deaths. Eighty per cent of diabetes and cardiovascular diseases, as well as 40 per cent of cancers, are believed to be preventable. Self-care is a vital part of any chronic disease prevention strategy, including education and the promotion of healthy lifestyles, as well as supporting the availability of consumer health products used in self-care. For example, nicotine replacement products have made an important contribution to the reduction of tobacco use in Canada, which now stands at an all-time low of 17 per cent.

The UN declaration emphasizes the importance of adequate health-care system funding, as the cost of managing chronic disease will continue to mount for the foreseeable future. Here, even the self-care of minor ailments makes a huge contribution. "There is growing evidence worldwide that supporting self-care can lead to significant reductions in the use (and cost) of health services," said CHP Canada President David Skinner. Over 90 per cent of Canadians agree that "If our health-care system is to remain sustainable, it is more important than ever that governments in Canada provide Canadians with the resources they need to practice responsible self-care for healthy living."¹

CHP Canada is a 115 year-old trade association representing the consumer health products industry, including the manufacturers of natural health products and over-the-counter products.

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¹ Ipsos-Reid, *Public Views on Self-Care*, Ottawa, 2004