

**Consumer Views of Safety and Efficacy
Issues Related to Consumer Health
Products and Natural Health Products**

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1. Executive Summary

This summary provides an overview of a survey of 1,000 Canadians on the subject of safety and efficacy of Consumer Health Products and Natural Health Products. A detailed report follows.

- More than four out of ten Canadians (42%) say they use Consumer Health Products every day. Another one-third of Canadians (31%) say they use these products a few times each week or every few weeks.
- The proportion of Canadians who use NHPs everyday is 41% - nearly identical to that for CHPs in general. In fact, 56% of Canadians use these products at least several times a week
- Canadians strongly prefer a pre-market approach to establishing safety and efficacy and believe that government oversight is equally needed for both safety and efficacy. Further, they believe the same oversight is required for both CHPs in general and NHPs in particular. Canadians do not demonstrate lower concern about the safety and efficacy of NHPs than they do for CHPs in general.
- Very large majorities of Canadians agree that government should ensure that there is evidence to support claims made by CHPs (95%) and that they may be used safely (94%) before allowing them on the market.
- In contrast, there is only weak minority agreement (35%) with the statement that CHPs should be assumed to be safe and action should only be taken against them if problems occur once they are on the market.
- Canadians views on safety and efficacy issues related to Natural Health Products do not differ substantially from their views regarding the broader consumer health products category. Very large majorities of Canadians (90%+) agree that both safety and efficacy of Natural Health Products should be demonstrated before those products reach market. In contrast, only 31% agree that the safety of NHPs should be assumed unless problems emerge once a product is on the market.
- Most Canadians (76%) say that the selection of Natural Health Products available to them has either increased (54%) or remained unchanged (22%) over the last two years. Only 2% say the selection has declined.
- Canadians strongly support legislation intended to protect consumers such as Bill C-36, the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act. Fully 91% say they support legislation of this kind, including two-thirds (67%) who *strongly* support it.

2. Introduction

This report provides a summary of findings from a survey of adult Canadians students undertaken on behalf of Consumer Health Products Canada (CHP Canada) in July 2010. The report was authored by Martin Redfern.

3. Research Objectives and Approach

In order to better understand the consumer environment surrounding regulatory issues for consumer health products and natural health products, CHP Canada has identified the following information requirements.

1. For consumer health products in general and natural health products more specifically, to understand the views of Canadians on the need for pre-market verification of safety and efficacy versus post-market monitoring and intervention.
2. To measure the degree to which the selection of natural health products available to consumers is perceived to be changing.
3. To determine support for consumer safety legislation such as Bill C - 36, the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act.
4. To examine any differences in these views based on demographic and regional characteristics and among frequent product users.

3.1. The Approach

To obtain answers to the information needs identified above, CHP Canada engaged Redfern Research to undertake an on-line survey of adult Canadians. The survey was designed by Redfern Research in close discussion with CHP Canada.

Respondents were selected randomly from the Pollara Consumer On-line Panel, which contains more than 100,000 pre-screened Canadians from all regions and demographic groups. Each was sent an invitation to participate in the survey by email. Fielding was closed once 1,000 respondents had completed the questionnaire.

The survey data was weighted to reflect the known age, gender and location of the population. The results are considered accurate to within 3.1%, 19 times in 20.

The results have been examined for differences related to demographic characteristics of the respondents. These include gender, age, income, education, region, employment status, generations in Canada, and urban versus rural areas. The data has also been examined in light of how often each respondent uses CHPs and NHPs. Where significant differences have been found, they are highlighted in the report.

4. Detailed Findings

4.1. Survey Context

The objectives of the research required that respondents understand the meaning of two key terms: “Consumer Health Product” and “Natural Health Product”. In order to be certain that respondents were able to provide accurate responses regarding each type of product, they were shown the following text. This not only provided accurate information upon which to base their answers, but also ensured that all respondents were answering based on the same definitions.

*“The following questions are about **Consumer Health Products**, which include **over-the-counter medications** such as pain relievers, cold medications, stomach remedies and so forth, as well as **natural health products**, such as vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional remedies such as traditional Chinese medicines.*

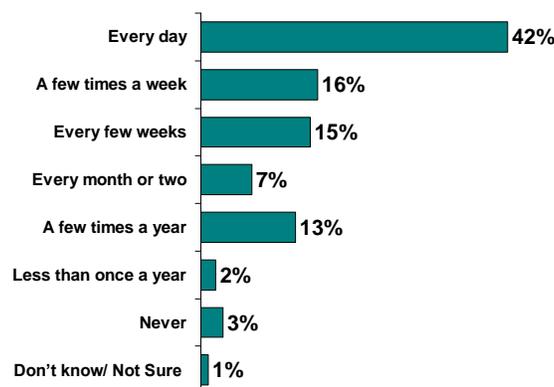
Since they can be bought without a prescription, all consumer health products, both over the counter medications and natural health products, must meet the same government safety criteria to make sure that they can be used safely without a doctor’s supervision.”

4.2. Frequency of Use

Over 40% of Canadians say they use Consumer Health Products every day. Another one-third of Canadians (31%) say they use these products a few times each week or every few weeks. Only 3% of Canadians say they never use Consumer Health Products.

CHP: Frequency of Use

On average, how often do you use ... Consumer Health Products?



Base: 1,000 Adult Canadians

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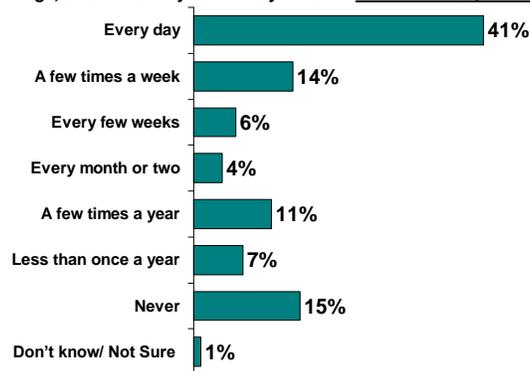
Men (35%) are less likely than women (48%) to say they use CHPs every day. Daily use also increases markedly with age, from 26% among those under 39, to 47% among those 40 to 64

and to 61% among those over 65. There are no other demographic trends related to frequency of use for CHPs.

The proportion of Canadians who use NHPs everyday is 41% - nearly identical to that for CHPs in general. In fact, 56% use these products at least several times a week. However, overall frequency of use of NHPs is lower than CHPs, and 15% of Canadians never use NHP products, as compared to 3% who never use CHPs.

NHP: Frequency of Use

The following questions are about **Natural Health Products**, which are one type of Consumer Health Product. They include vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional medicines such as Chinese medicine. On average, how often do you use any of these **natural health products**?



Base: 1,000 Adult Canadians

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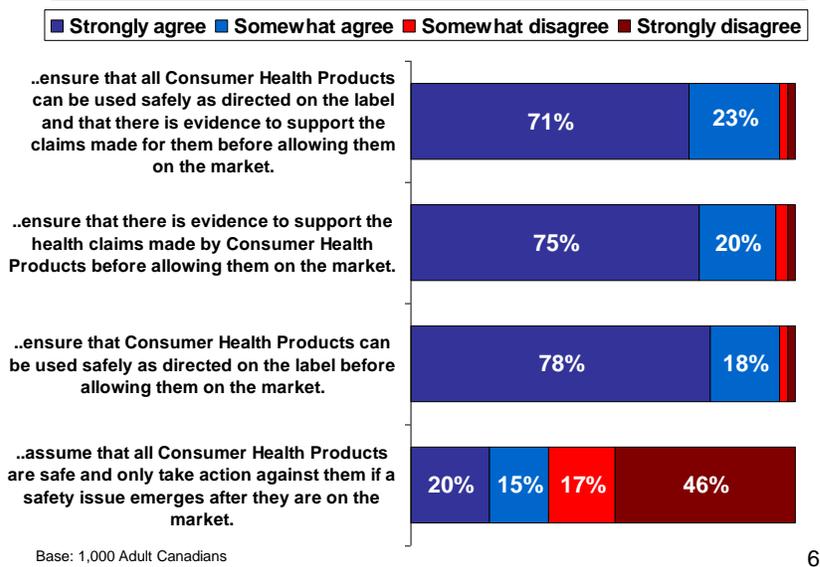
Evidently, NHPs account for much of the daily use of CHPs reported by Canadians. In fact, 79% of those who report using CHPs everyday also report using NHPs every day. As with CHPs, men (36%) are less likely than women (45%) to say they use NHPs every day. Daily use also increases from 26% among those under 39 to 44% among those 40 to 64 and 62% among those over 65. These demographic differences in the use of NHPs are nearly identical to those seen for CHPs.

4.3. Safety and Efficacy

The questionnaire included several questions regarding the appropriate role for government in ensuring the safety and efficacy of Consumer Health Products and Natural Health Products. The overall finding is that Canadians strongly prefer a pre-market approach to safety and efficacy and believe that government oversight is equally needed for both safety *and* efficacy. Further, Canadians feel the same oversight is required for both CHPs and NHPs. Canadians do not demonstrate lower concern about the safety and efficacy of NHPs than they do for CHPs.

As the following figure shows, very large majorities of Canadians agree that government should ensure that there is evidence to support claims made by CHPs (95%) and that they may be used safely (94%) before allowing them on the market. Ninety-four percent agree with the combined statement that both these requirements should be imposed by government.

Consumer Health Products: Government Should...



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In contrast, there is only weak minority agreement with the statement that CHPs should be assumed to be safe and that action should only be taken against them if problems occur once they are on the market. Thirty-five percent agree with this statement, including only 20% who *strongly* agree. On the other hand, 63% disagree with this statement including 46% who *strongly* disagree.

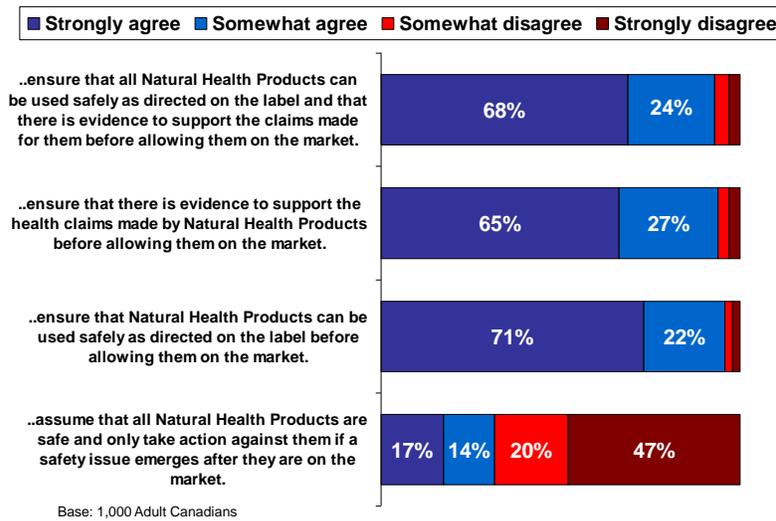
Taken together, these results leave little doubt that Canadians prefer a pre-market approach to ensuring safety and efficacy of Consumer Health Products, and that both these aspects of a product are important to verify.

Frequent users of CHPs are no less likely than other Canadians to support a pre-market approach to safety and efficacy of consumer health products. More than 90% agree with all three pre-market statements and only 33% support the post-market approach.

Although there are no significant demographic differences in Canadians' response to the three pre-market statements, there are significant variations in response to the post-market approach. While 41% of high school graduates agree with the post-market approach, this drops to 27% among university graduates. (There is a similar decline in support from 46% to 24% related to household income.)

Compared to CHPs, Canadians hold very similar views on safety and efficacy issues related to Natural Health Products. As shown in the following chart, very large majorities of Canadians agree that safety and efficacy of Natural Health Products should be demonstrated before those products reach market. In contrast, only 31% agree that the safety of NHPs should be assumed unless problems emerge once a product is on the market. Two-thirds of Canadians (67%) disagree with this idea.

Natural Health Products: Government Should...



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Support for a pre-market approach to ensuring safety and efficacy of NHPs finds equal support among Canadians who use natural health products every day. Between 89% and 95% of daily NHP users agree with each of the three pre-market statements. Only 34% of daily users agree with the post-market approach, however, and 66% disagree.

4.3.1. Differences: CHPs and NHPs

One clear finding from these results is that Canadians do not view Natural Health Products differently than they do the larger class of Consumer Health Products. As the following table shows, Canadians are just as likely to believe in pre-market verification of safety and efficacy for NHPs as they are for CHPs. They are also equally unwilling to support a post-market only approach for either CHPs or NHPs.

N=1,000 Government should..	Percent Agreeing for:	
	Consumer Health Products	Natural Health Products
..ensure they can be used safely as directed before market.	96%	93%
..ensure their health claims are justified before market.	95%	92%
..assume they are safe unless problems develop once on the market.	35%	31%

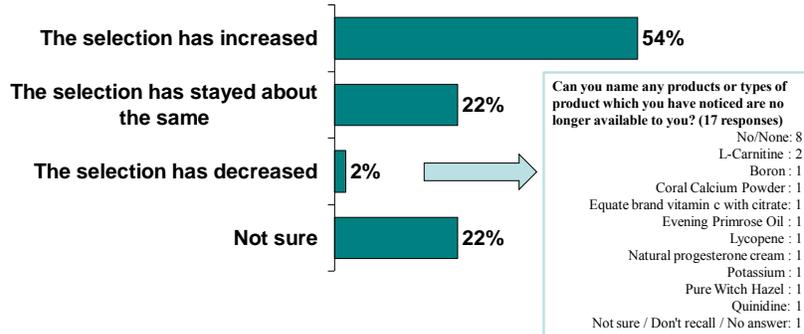
4.4. Access to Natural Health Products

Most Canadians (76%) say that the selection of Natural Health Products available to them has either increased (54%) or remained unchanged (22%) over the last two years. Only 2% say the selection has declined, while 22% are not sure.

Access to NHP Products

Thinking specifically of natural health products*, have you noticed any change in the selection of these products available to you over the last two years?

* Includes vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional medicines such as Chinese medicine.



Base: 761 Canadians who use Natural Health Products at least once per year.

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The views of daily users of NHPs are similar to those of other Canadians on this question. Fifty-five percent of Canadians who use NHPs every day say that the selection of these products has increased, while only 3% say the selection has decreased. There are no demographic trends in the way Canadians answer this question.

Among the very small number of Canadians (17) who feel the selection of NHPs available has declined, there is no consensus as to which products have disappeared.

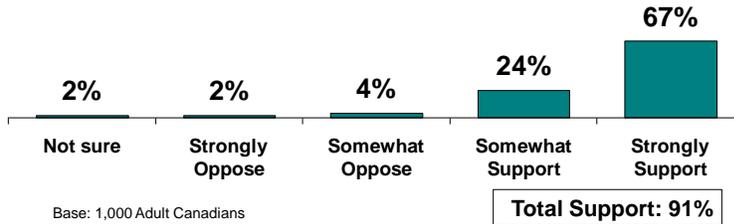
4.5. Support for Consumer Safety Legislation

Canadians strongly support legislation intended to protect consumers such as the Bill C-36, the *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*. Fully 91% say they support legislation of this kind, including two-thirds (67%) who *strongly support* it. It must be acknowledged that the description of the legislation used is important to understanding the results, and text of the question is therefore included in the following chart.

Support for Consumer Safety Legislation

Recently, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-36, the Canada Consumer Product Safety Act. This Act does not affect medications and health products like those discussed earlier, but covers most other products which consumers use.

The law is intended to strengthen consumer protection by: 1. requiring manufacturers and importers of consumer products to quickly report any serious incidents or safety concerns regarding their products; 2. requiring manufacturers or importers to provide test/study results on products when asked, and 3. giving the Government the power to order a mandatory recall of a dangerous product. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this type of legislation?



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There are no significant demographic differences in the way Canadians answer this question, meaning that strong support for such legislation is found in all regions and demographic groups. More than 90% of people who use either CHPs or NHPs daily also support this type of legislation.

5. Appendix A: Questionnaire and Results

Consumer Health Products Canada NHP Access Survey Initial Results – June 30, 2010

N = 1,000 Weighted / 1,016 Unweighted (National, On-line)

- Instructions inside square brackets “[]” were not shown to respondents.
- Section titles were not visible to respondents.
- [RANDOMIZE] indicates that lists were shown to respondents in random order.

[STANDARD ON-LINE INTRO]

This five-minute survey is entirely confidential.

The following questions are about Consumer Health Products, which include over-the-counter medications such as pain relievers, cold medications, stomach remedies and so forth, as well as natural health products, such as vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional remedies such as traditional Chinese medicines.

Since they can be bought without a prescription, all consumer health products, both over the counter medications and natural health products, must meet the same government safety criteria to make sure that they can be used safely without a doctor’s supervision.

1. On average, how often do you use any of these Consumer Health Products?

N=1000	%
Every day	42%
A few times a week	16%
Every few weeks	15%
Every month or two	7%
A few times a year	13%
Less than once a year	2%
Never	3%
Don't know/ Not Sure	1%

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2. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about Consumer Health Products. [RANDOMIZE – SEPARATE SCREEN PER STATEMENT]

N=1000	Total Agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Government should ensure that all <u>Consumer Health Products</u> can be used safely as directed on the label and that there is evidence to support the claims made for them before allowing them on the market.	94%	71%	23%	2%	2%	2%
Government should ensure that there is evidence to support the health claims made by <u>Consumer Health Products</u> before allowing them on the market.	95%	75%	20%	3%	2%	1%
Government should ensure that <u>Consumer Health Products</u> can be used safely as directed on the label before allowing them on the market.	96%	78%	18%	2%	2%	1%
Government should assume that all <u>Consumer Health Products</u> are safe and only take action against them if a safety issue emerges after they are on the market.	35%	20%	15%	17%	46%	2%

The following questions are about Natural Health Products, which are one type of Consumer Health Product. They include vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional medicines such as Chinese medicine.

3. On average, how often do you use any of these natural health products?

N=1000	%
Every day	41%
A few times a week	14%
Every few weeks	6%
Every month or two	4%
A few times a year	11%
Less than once a year	7%
Never	15%
Don't know/ Not Sure	1%

[IF LESS THAN ONCE PER YEAR / NEVER / DK / NOT SURE SKIP TO Q6]

4. Thinking specifically of natural health products*, have you noticed any change in the selection of these products available to you over the last two years?

N=761 Users	%
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The selection has increased	54%
The selection has stayed about the same	22%
The selection has decreased	2%
Not sure	22%

* Includes vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional medicines such as Chinese medicine.

[IF THE SELECTION HAS DECREASED, ASK QUESTION 5 ELSE SKIP TO Q6.]

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5. Can you name any products or types of product which you have noticed are no longer available to you? (Please type your answer in the box below.)

N=17	Number of Respondents Mentioning
No/None	8
L-Carnitine	2
Boron	1
Coral Calcium Powder	1
Equate brand vitamin c with citrate	1
Evening Primrose Oil	1
Lycopene	1
Natural progesterone cream	1
Potassium	1
Pure Witch Hazel	1
Quinidine	1
Not sure / Don't recall / No answer	1

6. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about natural health products such vitamins and minerals, herbal remedies, homeopathic medicines, and traditional medicines such as Chinese medicine. [RANDOMIZE – SEPARATE SCREEN PER STATEMENT.]

N=1000	Total Agree	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
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Government should ensure that all natural health products can be used safely as directed on the label and that there is evidence to support the claims made for them before allowing them on the market.	91%	68%	24%	4%	3%	2%
Government should ensure that there is evidence to support the health claims made by natural health products before allowing them on the market.	91%	65%	27%	3%	3%	3%
Government should ensure that natural health products can be used safely as directed on the label before allowing them on the market.	94%	71%	22%	2%	2%	2%
Government should assume that all natural health products are safe and only take action against them if a safety issue emerges after they are on the market.	31%	17%	14%	20%	47%	2%

7. Recently, the Government of Canada introduced Bill C-36, the *Canada Consumer Product Safety Act*.

This Act does not affect medications and health products like those discussed earlier, but covers most other products which consumers use.

The law is intended to strengthen consumer protection by:

- requiring manufacturers and importers of consumer products to quickly report any serious incidents or safety concerns regarding their products;
- requiring manufacturers or importers to provide test/study results on products when asked, and'
- giving the Government the power to order a mandatory recall of a dangerous product.

Generally speaking, do you support or oppose this type of legislation?

N=1000	%
Strongly Support	67%
Somewhat Support	24%
Somewhat Oppose	4%
Strongly Oppose	2%
Not sure	2%

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8. Were you or your parents born outside of Canada? (Check all that apply)

N=1000	%
Yes, I was born outside Canada	14%
Yes, one or both of my parents were born	22%

outside Canada	
No	66%
Not sure	1%

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9. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

N=1000	%
Elementary School	1%
High School	22%
College	18%
Technical/Trade School/Apprenticeship	13%
Undergraduate Degree	23%
Graduate/Professional Degree	22%
Not sure	1%

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10. What is the total annual household income of your family, before taxes? Is it...

N=1000	%
Less than \$25,000	12%
\$25,000 to less than \$50,000	23%
\$50,000 to less than \$75,000	19%
\$75,000 to less than \$100,000	14%
\$100,000 or over	18%
Not sure / No Answer	14%

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11. Which of the following categories matches your age? Is it...?

N=1000	%
Under 30	18%
30 to 39	20%
40 to 49	21%
50 to 64	24%
65 to 74	10%
75 or older	8%

12. Are you male or female?

N=1000	%
Male	48%
Female	51%

13. Urban/Rural

N=1000	%
Urban	86%
Rural	14%

14. Province [SYSTEM RECORDED]

N=1000	%
Newfoundland	1%
Nova Scotia	3%
New Brunswick	3%
Prince Edward Island	<1%
Quebec	24%
Ontario	37%
Manitoba	4%
Saskatchewan	3%
Alberta	10%
British Columbia	14%
Territories	<1%

-end-