

Canadians' Strong Health Literacy Scores Tied to Good Health Status, But Navigating Health System Remains a Challenge.

Today Marks International Self-Care Day – New Survey on Canadians and Health Literacy

July 24, 2017 – Ottawa, ON – According to a new survey by Consumer Health Products Canada (CHP Canada), Canadians with higher health literacy scores tend to enjoy better health. Overall, the health literacy of Canadians compares well with Europeans in terms of health knowledge and disease prevention, though Canadians struggle more with navigating the healthcare system, while finding it a little easier to judge their different treatment options.

On International Self-Care Day, the findings suggest that Canadians are well positioned to practice responsible self-care in their daily lives. “The strong association between high health literacy and good health shows how important this issue is to Canadians,” says Karen Proud, President of CHP Canada.

The survey was based on an approach developed by the European Health Literacy Project and looked at knowledge of healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion, while also exploring information processing and health related decision making. Respondents were then grouped together into four segments, characterizing their health literacy as either excellent, sufficient, problematic or inadequate. Overall, 73% of Canadians fell into the “excellent” or “sufficient” categories, compared to 61% of Dutch, 60% of Irish, 56% of Poles and 54% of Germans.

However, the survey also shows that, like Europeans, Canadians can find it challenging to judge the reliability of health information other than the information they get from their doctor or pharmacist. Canadians also struggle in other areas:

- 23% of Canadians find it “fairly difficult” or “very difficult” to find out where to get professional help when they are ill, compared to only 5% of Dutch, 9% of Irish, 13% of Germans and 14% of Poles;
- 54% of Canadians found it “fairly difficult” or “very difficult” to judge when to seek a second opinion from another doctor, compared to 46% of Dutch, 45% of Germans, 38% of Irish and just 25% of Poles.

Other Statistics on Canadians and health literacy:

- 89% of Canadians use their doctor for health advice vs 67% for pharmacists;
- 53% of Canadians find it difficult to judge the reliability of information on health risk in the media;
- 36% of Canadians find it difficult to find information on how to manage health problems like stress and depression;
- 35% of Canadians find it difficult to judge different treatment options;
- 34% of Canadians find it difficult to judge which health screenings they should have.

“On International Self-Care Day, we are encouraging Canadians to continue to practice responsible self-care and it begins with health literacy, the foundation of the seven pillars of self-care,” says Ms. Proud.



What is Self-Care?

We all practice self-care by doing the following things for ourselves and our families:

- Get a good night's sleep
- Get regular physical activity
- Not smoking
- Eat a healthy diet
- Brush our teeth
- Apply sunscreen
- Take a nutritional supplement, if needed
- Treat minor ailments like allergies, coughs and colds, headaches and heartburn with home remedies or OTC medications, used as directed
- Treat minor scrapes and bruises

What can YOU do when it comes to self-care?

- Discuss your self-care options with your doctor or pharmacist at your next visit;
- Look for credible sources of health information such as provincial and federal government health portals, websites associated with accredited health institutions or professions, and other evidence-based sources;
- Always read and follow the label directions when using consumer health products.

A previous survey by CHP Canada highlighted that if 1/7 of Canadians practiced more self-care, 500,000 Canadians who currently don't have access to a family doctor could get one.

About Consumer Health Products Canada:

CHP Canada is the industry association representing the companies that make evidence-based over-the-counter medicines and natural health products. These are the products you can find in medicine cabinets in every Canadian home. From sunscreens and vitamins, to pain relievers and allergy medications, people use consumer health products to maintain their health and manage their minor ailments. This is a fundamental part of self-care which is vital to the health of Canadians and the sustainability of our healthcare system.

[International Self-Care Day \(July 24th\)](#) was developed by the [International Self-Care Foundation](#), a UK charity with a global focus.

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Consumer Health Products Canada Research

** The survey was conducted online by Redfern Research between July 5 and July 12 with a sample of 2,114 Canadians. Respondents were screened to identify those who reside in Canada and are 18 years of age or older.*