

NEWS RELEASE

Do you really need to head to the doctor for heartburn, a runny nose, or a skinned knee?

In Advance of International Self-Care Day (July 24), CHP Canada says most Canadians should “trust their gut.”

(July 22, 2015 – Ottawa, ON) – Summer means sunburns, allergies, a case or two of post-barbecue heartburn and minor cuts and scrapes, but the majority of Canadians are not leaving their cottages to seek medical treatment for these and other minor health concerns. Surprisingly, a lot of us still spend hours waiting to see a doctor, just to be reassured.

Results from a Consumer Health Products Canada (CHP Canada) survey show that 70 % of Canadians who visited a doctor for a minor ailment said they expected the doctor to confirm what they already thought they had. Sure enough, that was exactly the outcome of these doctor visits. (Table 1)

The survey also indicates 77 % of Canadians who recently suffered from cough/cold, headache, allergies or heartburn, said they would rather manage these minor ailments themselves than visit a doctor.

However, 14% of Canadians with minor ailments still make the trek to a doctor’s waiting room.

“While most Canadians manage their minor health issues on their own – we call this self-care - there are still many who feel they need reassurance from a doctor to confirm what they already know,” said Karen Proud, President of Consumer Health Products Canada. “And this comes at a cost to our health care system. On International Self-Care Day, we are encouraging Canadians to continue to practice responsible self-care for themselves and their families when it comes to the minor bumps, bruises, sneezes and scrapes that we encounter in our daily lives.”

For example, two percent of minor ailment sufferers who responded to the CHP Canada survey saw a doctor even though they said their symptoms were mild. If just these Canadians practiced self-care instead, 500,000 Canadians who currently don’t have access to a family doctor could get one¹.

“Of course there are circumstances where it’s important for Canadians to consult their doctor,” says Gerry Harrington, Vice President of Policy and Regulatory Affairs. “Especially for those who might be at risk of complications like young children, the elderly or those with underlying health problems, but for minor ailments, most of the time we can trust our gut instincts and practice responsible self-care, and save the doctor visits for when we are truly ill.”

Table 1: Expectations/Outcomes of Doctor Visits for Minor Ailments

Expectations/Outcomes of Doctor Visits for Minor Ailments <i>(Top three responses)</i> <i>Unweighted base: 400 Individuals who visited a doctor during their last ailment episode.</i>	When you went to see a doctor during your most recent episode of [AILMENT], what were you <u>expecting</u> he/she <u>would do</u>?	When you saw the doctor during your most recent episode of [AILMENT], what did he/she <u>actually</u> do?
Confirm that my ailment was what I already thought	70%	71%
Prescribe a medication I've used before	54%	55%
Reassure me that my ailment was nothing to worry about	49%	47%

Minor ailments = cough/cold, headache, allergies or heartburn

What is Self-Care?

We all practice self-care by doing the following things for ourselves and/or 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
- Use credible sources of information to help decide when we do need to see a doctor, pharmacist or other health professional

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

- Discuss your self-care options with your doctor at your next visit or with your pharmacist;
- 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.
- Take CHP Canada's online quiz to gauge your knowledge of a few self-care practices (see link below)

What is Self-Care Day?

International Self-Care Day (July 24th) was developed by the [International Self-Care Foundation](#), a UK charity with a global focus. Self-Care Day provides an opportunity to raise the profile of healthy lifestyle programmes around the world and to promote self-care as a vital foundation of health. All those involved in health are encouraged to use International Self-Care Day to help advance the cause of healthy lifestyles and wellness.

Consumer Health Products Canada

Consumer Health Products Canada is the industry association that represents 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.

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Consumer Health Products Canada Research

** The survey was conducted online by Redfern Research between January 12 and 18, 2015 with a sample of 1304 Canadians. Respondents were screened to identify those who had suffered one of four minor ailments in the last two months (n=1201) and those who had visited a doctor for one of those ailments in the last two months (n=400).*

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Infographic: http://www.chpcanada.ca/sites/default/files/self_care_infographic.pdf

Online Self-Care Quiz: <http://www.chpcanada.ca/en/self-care-quiz>

Willemsen KR, Harrington G. From Patient to Resource: The Role of Self-Care in Patient-Centered Care of Minor Ailments. *SelfCare* 2012;3(3):43-55.