



Press Release

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Over-the-counter (OTC) self-medication now common practice in Hong Kong

Due to their busy lifestyle, more and more people in Hong Kong find over-the-counter (OTC) self-medication the most appropriate remedy to minor ailments. With increased exposure to OTC information and easier access to drug stores, consumers feel more comfortable using self-medication: The top three factors mentioned, contributing to an increased OTC usage being ease of access to drug stores, the rise of general health consciousness and freedom from the hassle of doctor visits. And OTC usage keeps rising with the years.

Most Commonly Purchased OTCs

According to Q1 2017 data from Media Atlas, Hong Kong's most renowned syndicated media survey, the three most common self-medicated (OTC) health conditions in Hong Kong are **cold & flu, cough & sore throat and headaches**; Over half of Hong Kong people declare having purchased OTCs for one of these conditions over the past 12 months.

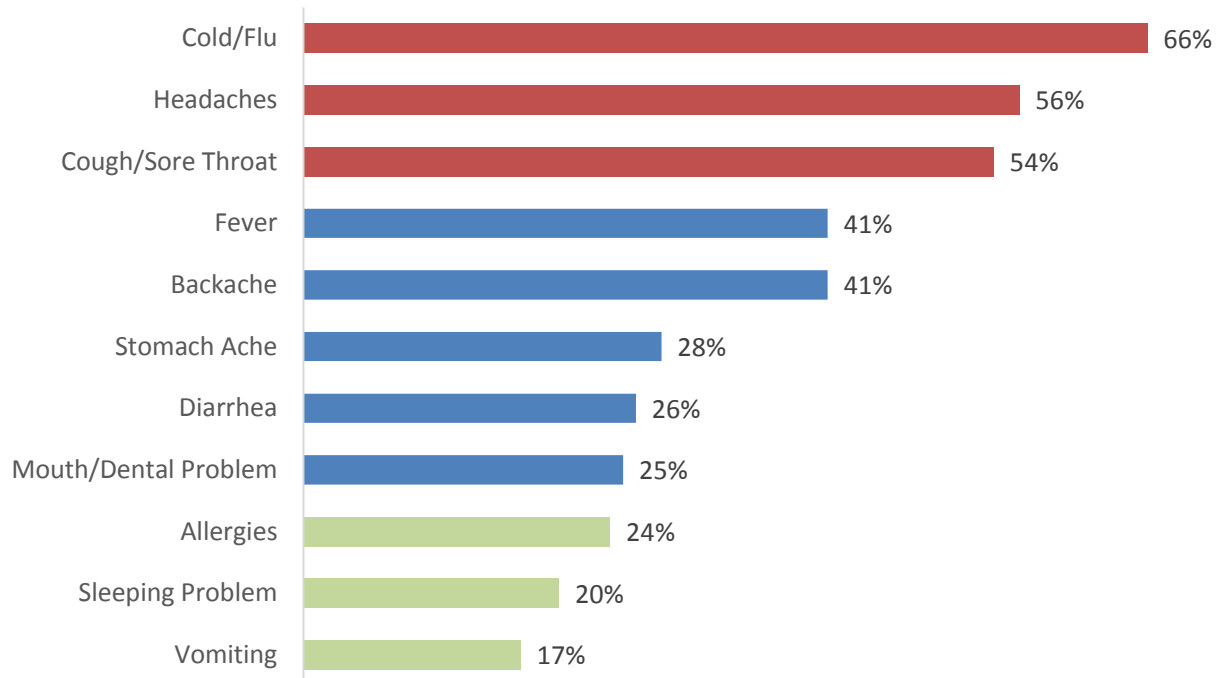
Samuel Lam, Ipsos Healthcare Director in Hong Kong, explains: "Each of the three conditions usually present acute, easily identifiable symptoms, which may contribute to the choice of self-medication. Besides, the great amount of advertising by well-known OTCs brands like "Panadol" and "Fortune" have also greatly increased awareness and purchase consideration over the years."

Comparatively, people in Hong Kong tend to buy less OTCs for **sleeping problems, allergies and mouth & dental issues**, since less OTC products are available for those more serious symptoms.

Yet the study shows that almost 9% purchase OTC medicine for sleeping problems **at least once a month** - and even **twice a month or more** for 6.7% - suggesting more widespread sleeping disorders in the city.

Meanwhile, 12.2% of respondents purchased OTC for backache/muscle pain at least once a month. Samuel Lam continues: "We see this as a common illustration of typical issues caused by sedentary lifestyle, such as stress and anxiety." Perhaps not surprisingly, 5.7% of consumers in Hong Kong say they buy OTC for both sleeping problems and backache/muscle pain at least once a month.

People Who Buy OTCs - past 12 months

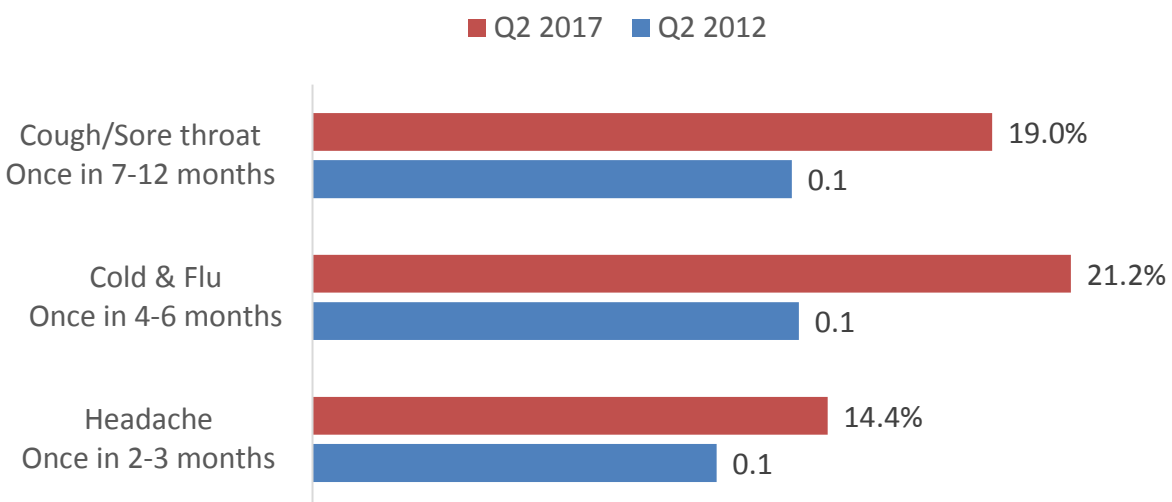


OTC Usage on the rise

OTC consumption in Hong Kong has increased fast. In the space of five years, the percentage of consumers who purchase OTC medicines at least once a year increased from 61% to 75%

Not only is the proportion of users increasing, but the frequency of purchase per user is increasing too: Over the past five years, more OTC users have bought Headache OTC every two to three months, cold & flu OTC every four to six months, and cough & sore throat medicine every seven to 12 months. The active population (aged 25-44) represents the bigger buyers, certainly including for their needs and those of their children and elderly.

OTC Purchase Frequency Evolution



Most importantly, the average number of types of OTCs per buyer doubled from 2 to 4 from 2012 to 2017. Around **20%** buy OTCs **once a month** for at least two conditions, while **more than half** of respondents buy OTCs **once every 6 months** for at least 2 conditions.

Samuel Lam Concludes: “People in Hong Kong are paying more attention to their health in the recent years. Due to the rising health-consciousness and the hectic lifestyles, in the past 5 years people were increasingly keen to **self-medication** by purchasing OTCs for minor ailments, like headache, cough and cold. **This trend is expected to be continuing in the next few years.**

Like the other parts of the world, consumers are increasingly motivated to find information and treatment for themselves, and are also highly aware of branding, marketing communication, treatment cost, and convenience benefits. **Access** and **availability** are also key factors of product success as people will look for products which are on **top of their mind, easy to buy** with broader **variety of choice.**”

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About Media Atlas

This 12th annual Ipsos Media Atlas Hong Kong study captures a complete cross section of society, revealing the media consumption, attitudes and lifestyles of Hong Kong consumers. It covers 5,074 Hong Kong respondents aged 12 to 64 in April 2016 to March 2017. The Ipsos Media Atlas Hong Kong study tracks:

1. Media consumption, product ownership, attitudes and values using computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI).
2. Brand, spending pattern and lifestyle insights using online and offline data collection.

Ipsos works closely with major media specialists, media owners and advertisers in Hong Kong to develop surveys relevant to local applications.

About Ipsos

Ipsos is an independent market research company controlled and managed by research professionals. Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos has grown into a worldwide research group with a strong presence in all key markets. Ipsos ranks third in the global research industry.

Ipsos has been listed on the Paris Stock Exchange since 1999 and generated global revenues of € 1.669,5 million (2 218,4M\$) in 2014. With offices in 87 countries, Ipsos delivers insightful expertise across six research specializations: advertising, customer loyalty, marketing, media, public affairs research, and survey management.

Ipsos researchers assess market potential and interpret market trends. They develop and build brands. They help clients build long-term relationships with their customers. They test advertising and study audience responses to various media and they measure public opinion around the globe.

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