

# DIRECT TO CONSUMER ADVERTISING



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## DIRECT TO CONSUMER ADVERTISING

**Toronto, ONTARIO** – According to a new study conducted by Ipsos-Reid on behalf of the Alliance for Access to Medical Information, six in ten (62%) Canadians agree that “advertising about prescription drugs/medications directly to Canadians consumers should be allowed,” while almost as many (57%) think “prescription medication can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers at present.”

Seven in ten (71%) Canadians say they know enough about “prevention and treatment issues and prescription medications to effectively manage their personal or family’s health.” Asked “what responses they rely on for information specifically about prescription medications and drugs,” the top two sources are “doctors” (55%) and “pharmacists” (64%), followed by “the Internet” (28%), various media sources (22%), “books or the library” (13%), and “friends or family” (8%). Only one in seven (16%) have gone to their doctor and asked him or her to prescribe a specific drug they saw advertised in print or broadcast.

Half (48%) of respondents think allowing direct advertising of prescription medication to Canadians “will not increase healthcare costs because ultimately it is the doctor who decides whether or not a prescribed medication is necessary for a patient.” The remaining half are split between whether it “will result in patients being more aware of their own ailments and medication needs, which may increase costs to the healthcare system in the short term, but it is worth it as it may improve the health of Canadians and decrease healthcare costs in the longer term” (25%) or it “will cause people to ask their doctors for more and expensive medications, which will result in increased costs to the healthcare system” (24%). The remaining 3% “don’t know.”



Half (48%) of Canadians believe the federal government limits “how prescription drugs or medications can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers,” while one-third (32%) do not, and two in ten (20%) “don’t know.” Having learned that “the federal government does in fact regulate how prescription medications and drugs can be advertised directly to consumers and that an ad can name a condition or illness but cannot mention the name of any prescription medication or that the ad can mention the name of a prescription medication but cannot name a specific condition or illness that it treats,” six in ten (58%) have a favourable reaction to the current regulations.

Substantial majorities agree with the statement, “I feel that advertising about prescription drugs or medications directly to Canadians consumers should be allowed” if the advertising were required to implement certain regulations: nine in ten (89%) would agree with the statement if the advertising were required to “describe major side effects;” 87% would agree if the advertising were required to “include a ‘consult your physician’ tag line;” 86% would agree if the advertising were required to “describe for whom the product is appropriate and inappropriate;” 84% would agree if the advertising were required to “provide sources for further third party, unbiased information;” and 83% would agree with the statement if the advertising were required to “be pre-screened and approved by an independent regulatory authority appointed by the government.”

Respondents were read a list of ideas people have had about regulations that could be required if advertising about medications/drugs directly to Canadian consumers is to be allowed and asked whether or not they thought it was a good idea: More than nine in ten (93%) think it would be a good idea to “describe major side effects;” a similar proportion (92%) think it would be a good idea to “describe for whom the product is appropriate and inappropriate (e.g. consumer help line, website, not smoke while taking the drug etc.);” 88% think it would be a good idea to “provide sources for further third party, unbiased

information (e.g. consumer help line, website for the Arthritis Society, Heart & Stroke Foundation, etc.); ” 85% think it would be a good idea to “include a ‘consult your physician’ tag line;” 84% think it would be a good idea to “not appear for new medications until after a six month period to allow physicians time to familiarize themselves with the new medications;” 83% think it would be a good idea to “include examples of appropriate questions to ask;” and eight in ten (80%) think it would be a good idea to “be pre-screened and approved by an independent regulatory authority appointed by the government.”

*These are the findings of an Ipsos-Reid poll conducted on behalf of the Alliance for Access to medical Information between October 21<sup>st</sup> and October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2003. The telephone survey is based on a randomly selected sample of 1,056 Canadians. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within  $\pm 3.1$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire population of Canadians been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were statistically weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.*

Six in ten (62%) Canadians agree (27% “strongly agree,” 35% “somewhat agree”) that “advertising about prescription drugs/medications directly to Canadians consumers should be allowed.” The remaining four in ten (38%) disagree (15% “somewhat disagree,” 23% “strongly disagree”) with the statement.

- Atlantic Canadians (70%) are the most likely to agree that “advertising about prescription drugs/medications directly to Canadians consumers should be allowed,” followed by residents of British Columbia (63%), Ontario (62%), Alberta (61%), Quebec (58%), and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (54%).



- Canadians with a university degree (46%) are more likely than others (34%) to disagree.

Asked whether or not “prescription medication can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers at present,” six in ten (57%) say yes. Eight in ten (82%) think “non-prescription medicine can be advertised directly to the public,” and seven in ten (72%) say the same about “herbal medication.”

- Atlantic Canadians (66%) are the most likely to think prescription medication can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers at present,” followed by residents of Alberta (63%), British Columbia (58%), Ontario (58%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (52%), and Quebec (49%).
- Canadians without a university degree (60%) are more likely than those with (49%) to think “prescription medication can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers at present.”

Seven in ten (71%) Canadians say they know enough (16% “more than enough,” 55% “enough”) about “prevention and treatment issues and prescription medications to effectively manage their personal or family’s health,” while three in ten (28%) say they do not (17% “not quite enough,” 11% “not nearly enough”).

- Canadians with at least some post secondary education (73%) are more likely than others (65%) to say they know enough about “prevention and treatment issues and prescription medications to effectively manage their personal or family’s health.”

Asked “what sources they rely on for information specifically about prescription medications and drugs,” the top two sources are “doctors” (55%) and “pharmacists” (64%). The third most common source is the Internet (28%), followed by media sources with 22% of Canadians

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reporting that they rely on “magazines” (10%), “newspapers” (6%), and “television” (6%) for information on prescription medications. One in seven (13%) rely on “books or the library” and 8% rely on “friends or family.”

- Canadians 35 years of age and older (59%) are more likely than their younger counterparts (46%) to rely on pharmacists. Canadians 18-54 (31%) are more likely than their elders (22%) to rely on the internet.
- Women (64%) are more likely than men (46%) to rely on pharmacists.

Only one in seven (16%) have gone to their doctor and asked him or her to prescribe a specific drug they saw advertised in print or broadcast (84% have not).

- There are no socio-demographic differences for this question.

Asked which of a series of three statements was closest to their own, half (48%) of respondents think allowing direct advertising of prescription medication to Canadians “will not increase healthcare costs because ultimately it is the doctor who decides whether or not a prescribed medication is necessary for a patient.” The remaining half are split between whether it “will result in patients being more aware of their own ailments and medication needs, which may increase costs to the healthcare system in the short term, but it is worth it as it may improve the health of Canadians and decrease healthcare costs in the longer term” (25%) or it “will cause people to ask their doctors for more and expensive medications, which will result in increased costs to the healthcare system” (24%). The remaining 3% “don’t know.”

- Women (52%) are more likely than men (43%) to think allowing direct advertising of prescription medication to Canadians “will not increase healthcare costs because

ultimately it is the doctor who decides whether or not a prescribed medication is necessary for a patient.”

Half (48%) of Canadians believe the federal government limits “how prescription drugs or medications can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers,” while one-third (32%) do not, and two in ten (20%) “don’t know.”

- Canadians 18-54 years of age (51%) are more likely than their elders (39%) to think the federal government limits “how prescription drugs or medications can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers.”
- Canadians with a university degree (55%) are more likely than others (44%) to think the federal government limits “how prescription drugs or medications can be advertised directly to Canadian consumers.”

Having learned that “the federal government does in fact regulate how prescription medications and drugs can be advertised directly to consumers and that an ad can name a condition or illness but can not mention the name of any prescription medication or that the ad can mention the name of a prescription medication but cannot name a specific condition or illness that it treats,” six in ten (58%) have a favourable (5% “very favourable,” 53% “favourable”) reaction to the current regulations. Four in ten (38%) have an unfavourable (8% “very unfavourable,” 30% “unfavourable”) reaction, 2% “don’t care” or are “neutral,” and 2% “don’t know.”

- Canadians 18-34 years of age (65%) are more likely than their elders (54%) to have a favourable reaction.



Substantial majorities agree with the statement, “I feel that advertising about prescription drugs or medications directly to Canadians consumers should be allowed” if the advertising were required to implement certain regulations:

Nine in ten (89%) would agree (68% “strongly agree,” 21% “somewhat agree”) with the statement if the advertising were required to “describe major side effects” (5% “somewhat disagree,” 6% “strongly disagree”).

- Canadians without a university degree (92%) are more likely than those with (82%) to agree.

Nearly nine in ten (87%) would agree (55% “strongly agree,” 32% “somewhat agree”) with the statement if the advertising were required to “include a ‘consult your physician’ tag line” (6% “somewhat disagree,” 5% “strongly disagree,” 2% “don’t know”).

- There are no socio-demographic differences for this question.

A similar proportion (86%) would agree (54% “strongly agree,” 32% “somewhat agree”) with the statement if the advertising were required to “describe for whom the product is appropriate and inappropriate” (6% “somewhat disagree,” 7% “strongly disagree”).

- Atlantic Canadians (94%) are more likely than residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (84%) and Quebec (84%) to agree.
- Canadians 18-54 years of age (89%) are more likely than their elders (81%) to agree.

More than eight in ten (84%) would agree (43% “strongly agree,” 41% “somewhat agree”) with the statement if the advertising were required to “provide sources for further third

party, unbiased information” (8% “somewhat disagree,” 8% “strongly disagree,” 1% “don’t know”).

- There are no socio-demographic differences for this question.

A similar proportion (83%) would agree (45% “strongly agree,” 38% “somewhat agree”) with the statement if the advertising were required to “be pre-screened and approved by an independent regulatory authority appointed by the government” (7% “somewhat disagree,” 10% “strongly disagree,” 1% “don’t know”).

- Atlantic Canadians (91%) are more likely than residents of Alberta (79%), Saskatchewan/Manitoba (80%), and Ontario (81%) to agree.
- Canadians 18-34 years of age (87%) are more likely than those 55 years and older (78%) to agree.

Respondents were read a list of ideas people have had about regulations that could be required if advertising about medications/drugs directly to Canadian consumers is to be allowed and asked whether or not they thought it was a good idea:

More than nine in ten (93%) think it would be a good idea (41% “excellent,” 27% “very good,” 25% “good”) to “describe major side effects” (7% don’t think it’s a good idea, 1% “don’t know”).

- There are no socio-demographic differences for this question.

A similar proportion (92%) think it would be a good idea (42% “excellent,” 25% “very good,” 25% “good”) to “describe for whom the product is appropriate and inappropriate (e.g.

consumer help line, website, not smoke while taking the drug etc.)” (6% don’t think it’s a good idea, 1% “don’t know”).

- Atlantic Canadians (97%) are more likely than residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (87%) to think it’s a good idea.

Nearly nine in ten (88%) think it would be a good idea (28% “excellent,” 24% “very good,” 36% “good”) to “provide sources for further third party, unbiased information (e.g. consumer help line, website for the Arthritis Society, Heart & Stroke Foundation, etc.) ” (11% don’t think it’s a good idea, 1% “don’t know”).

- Atlantic Canadians (95%) are more likely than residents of Saskatchewan/Manitoba (84%) to think it’s a good idea.

Eight-five (85%) think it would be a good idea (30% “excellent,” 23% “very good,” 32% “good”) to “include a ‘consult your physician’ tag line” (13% don’t think it’s a good idea, 2% “don’t know”).

- Residents of Quebec (91%) are more likely than residents of British Columbia (80%) to think it’s a good idea.
- Women (89%) are more likely than men (82%) to think it’s a good idea.

A similar proportion (84%) think it would be a good idea (27% “excellent,” 20% “very good,” 37% “good”) to “not appear for new medications until after a six month period to allow physicians time to familiarize themselves with the new medications” (16% don’t think it’s a good idea).



- Atlantic Canadians (91%) are more likely than residents of Ontario (81%) and Quebec (82%) to think it's a good idea.

More than eight in ten (83%) think it would be a good idea (23% "excellent," 20% "very good," 40% "good") to "include examples of appropriate questions to ask" (16% don't think it's a good idea, 1% "don't know").

- Atlantic Canadians (91%) are more likely than residents of British Columbia (75%) and Saskatchewan/Manitoba (77%) to think it's a good idea.
- Women (86%) are more likely than men (80%) to think it's a good idea.

Eight in ten (80%) think it would be a good idea (25% "excellent," 22% "very good," 33% "good") to "be pre-screened and approved by an independent regulatory authority appointed by the government" (20% don't think it's a good idea, 1% "don't know").

- Canadians 18-34 years of age (85%) are more likely than those 55 and older (75%) to think it's a good idea.

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