

MANY CANADIANS TAKE RISKS WITH OTC PAIN MEDICATIONS



Ipsos Reid

Public Release Date: - February 1, 2006 – 9:00 a.m. (EDT)

Ipsos Reid is Canada's market intelligence leader and the country's leading provider of public opinion research. With operations in eight cities, Ipsos Reid employs more than 300 researcher professionals and support staff in Canada. The company has the biggest network of telephone call centres in Canada, as well as the largest pre-recruited household and on-line panels. Ipsos Reid's

Canadian marketing research and public affairs practices are staffed with seasoned research consultants with extensive industry-specific backgrounds, offering the premier suite of research vehicles in Canada—including the Ipsos Trend Report, the leading source of public opinion in the country—all of which provide clients with actionable and relevant information. Ipsos Reid is an Ipsos company, a leading global survey-based market research group. To learn more, visit

www.ipsos.ca

For copies of other news releases, please visit

<http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/>

© Ipsos Reid

*Washington • New York • Chicago • Minneapolis • Seattle • San Francisco
Vancouver • Edmonton • Calgary • Winnipeg • Toronto • Ottawa • Montreal*



MANY CANADIANS TAKE RISKS WITH OTC PAIN MEDICATIONS

Many Take More OTC Pain Medication Than Recommended

Almost four in ten (37%) Canadian adults admit they have taken more than the recommended amount of over-the-counter (OTC) pain medication by engaging in one or more of the following dangerous behaviours:

- One third (32%) have taken the next dose sooner than directed on the label
- One in five (18%) have taken more pills at a single time than the label recommended
- One in five (17%) have taken more than the number of doses per day as directed on the label

Some Do Not Know Important Information About OTC Pain Medications

When taking a non-prescription pain reliever for the first time, some Canadian adults confess they do not read all of the information on the package. While most say they read the label to see how many pills to take and how often (91%), what symptoms the medication is used for (85%), and possible side effects of usage (77%), some are not reading important warnings about usage with other non-prescription medications (27% do not read), effects of interaction with other medication (32% do not read), and / or active ingredients (48% do not read).

In addition, many Canadians have never discussed important information about OTC pain medications with a health professional such as a doctor or pharmacist. Only four in ten (44%) have ever discussed interactions with other OTC or prescription medications. A similar proportion (38%) has talked to an expert about the proper length of time to take over-the-counter pain medications or risks of taking them continuously. Other topics that were only discussed by a few include risk of stomach bleeding or ulcers (30%), risk of liver or kidney damage (27%) and interactions with dietary supplements (20%).

Others Hold Beliefs That Could Put Them At Risk For Drug Interactions Or Side Effects

There are also signs of other dangerous behaviours some Canadian adults are engaging in:

- Four in ten (42%) say if taken according to directions, its okay to take an OTC pain reliever while taking an OTC product for a cold or sinus condition.
- Three in ten (31%) agree they don't usually read the directions on the OTC pain medication package when they take medication because they know how much to take.
- One in three (29%) say they don't worry much about how long or how often they take an OTC pain medication as long as it manages their pain.
- Another quarter (26%) agree as long as they take OTC pain medications according to the label instructions, it's safe to also take prescription pain medications.

© Ipsos Reid



- Almost one in five (16%) believe that taking more than the recommended dose of OTC pain medication will make the pain go away faster.
- Just over one in ten (12%) admit they sometimes add an OTC pain medication to a prescription pain medication, believing they get more pain relief without increasing the potential for side effects.

Meanwhile, few are concerned about potential side effects of OTC pain medications. Only a quarter (26%) say they are extremely or very concerned, while one third (32%) are somewhat concerned and over 4 in ten (41%) are not very or not at all concerned.

Doctors Are Concerned About Their Patients' Use Of OTC Pain Medications

Three quarters (75%) of Canadian doctors in general practice believe there is abusive use of OTC medications. In addition, most (68%) believe that many of their patients use OTC pain medications for a significantly longer period of time than necessary to treat the pain. At the same time, only one third (35%) feel most of their patients really understand the risks associated with taking this type of medication.



The Use Of OTC Pain Medication Is High

Over eight in ten (83%) of Canadian adults say they have used an OTC medication for pain in the past year.

On average, those taking this type of drug report using it about five times in the past month. This average is made up of about one quarter (24%) who did not take any OTC pain relievers in the past month, one third (33%) who used them once or twice, one quarter (25%) who used them between three and nine times, and one in five (18%) who used them ten times or more.

Canadians Want To Learn About OTC Pain Medication Safety

The good news is that many Canadians (70%) would ask a health care professional if they heard or read some news which provided information on the risks of using OTC pain medications incorrectly. In fact, over one third (36%) would ask their pharmacist and a comparable number (34%) would ask their doctor about it. Others would change the way they use OTC pain relievers (18%) or do nothing (11%).

When asked who is their most important source of information about OTC pain medications – pharmacists or physicians, two thirds (63%) choose pharmacists and one third (33%) chose physicians, while a few (4%) did not know.



These are the findings of two Ipsos Reid/Pfizer polls conducted from December 6th to 23rd, 2005. For the general population survey, a representative randomly-selected sample of 2000 adult Canadians was interviewed by telephone. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate to within ± 2.2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult Canadian population been polled. For the physician survey, a representative randomly-selected sample of 200 general practitioner Canadian physicians was interviewed by telephone. Results of this group are considered accurate to within ± 6.9 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire Canadian general practitioner physician population been polled. The margin of error will be larger within regions and for other sub-groupings of the survey population. These data were weighted to ensure the sample's regional and age/sex composition reflects that of the actual Canadian population according to the 2001 Census data.

For more information on this news release, please contact:

***Andrew Grenville
Senior Vice President
Ipsos Reid
Health Practice
(416) 324-2900***

For full tabular results, please visit our website at www.ipsos.ca. News Releases are available at: <http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/>