



# Consumers tough it out in tough times

## Over-the-counter medications

The Nielsen Global Online Consumer Survey, conducted among more than 25,000 Internet users in 50 markets from Europe, Asia Pacific, North and Latin America and the Middle East, finds Canadians reach for the sure-cure when they need over-the-counter medication.

### Recession Leads to Cutbacks in Medication

The recession might be giving consumers all sorts of headaches, upset and pain – and it also means they’re less likely to spring for the medication to cure themselves.

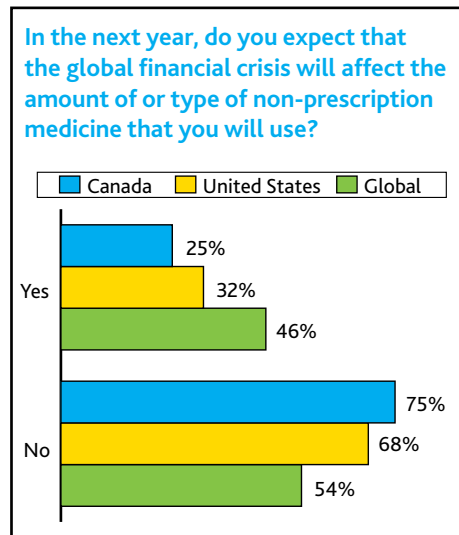
In Nielsen’s March 2009 survey, almost half (46%) of consumers worldwide – including 25% of Canadians and 32% of Americans – say that the global economic slowdown is having a major impact on the amount or type of non-prescription medication they use.

Of those Canadians who said the recession is affecting their medication purchases, the cutbacks include:

- Using medication less frequently (26%).
- Using less than the recommended dosage at times (13%).
- Buying smaller quantities (10%).
- Eliminating non-prescription medication entirely (4%).

Some Canadians who claim that their medication usage will change also plan to take proactive steps. Just over one in 10 (11%) say they’ll use more “natural and

traditional remedies.” Another 8% plan to visit the doctor more instead of buying medicine. And 4% say that they’ll buy more products that will help to prevent illness in the first place.



### What Do We Do When Ailments Strike?

Canadians seem to have a higher tolerance for ailments than the rest of the world; for minor ailments, 10% of consumers in Canada, vs. 5% of survey respondents globally, say they never take non-prescription medication.

At the first signs of a minor ailment, what do we do? The highest percentage – 66% of consumers in Canada and 62% worldwide – usually wait to see if the problem gets better before taking medicine. Another 24% of Canadian consumers either usually (18%) or always (6%) take medicine as soon as they start to feel unwell.

### Four in 10 Fear Effects of Medicine

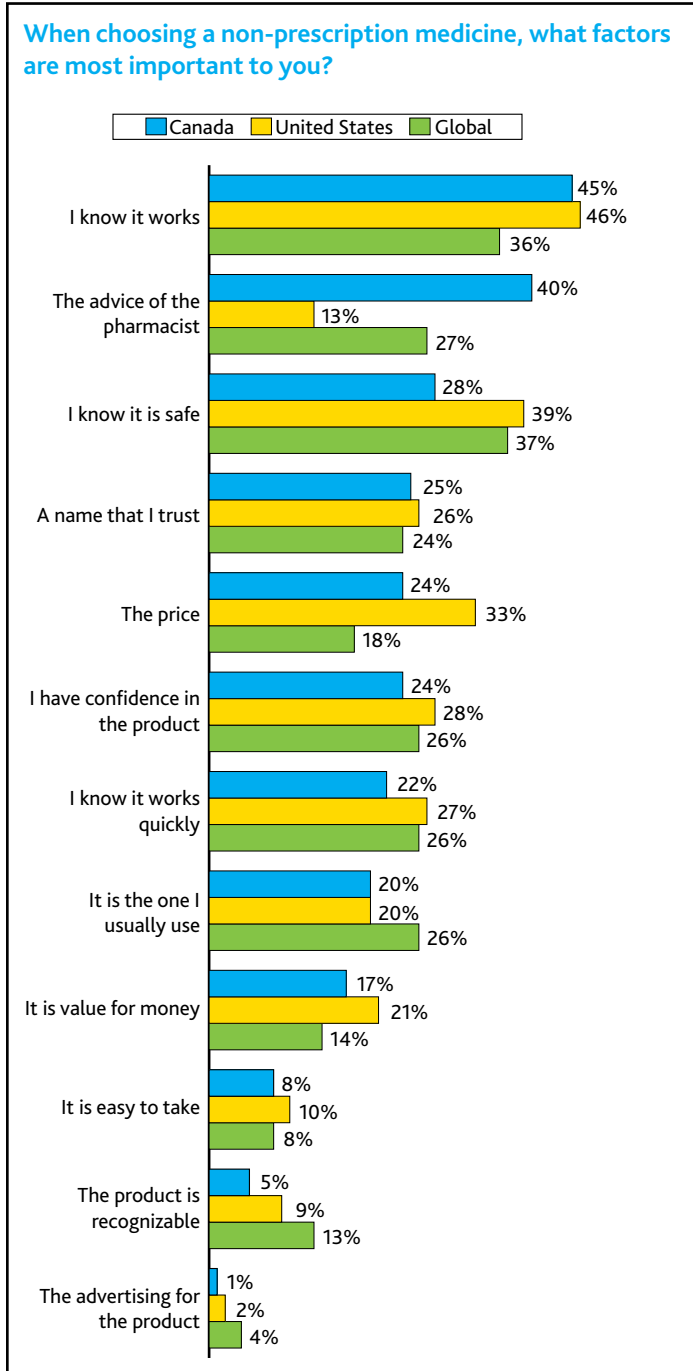
Why won’t consumers take medicine for minor ailments? Four in 10 Canadians (41%) feel that taking medicine can be harmful to their health. This is less than the 47% of global consumers who said that, but more than the 33% of Americans who agreed.

Another 33% of Canadians opt to either try other methods of treatment (16%) or visit the doctor for advice (17%). Perhaps not surprising given the Canadian Medicare system, Canadians are twice as likely as Americans (9%) to visit the doctor in these situations.

For 6% of Canadians, the expense was the main barrier cited to using over-the-counter medication.

## Trust in Pharmacists Sways Purchases

Canadian consumers put a lot of stock in their pharmacist. That was the number one answer given when asked what factors are most important when choosing a non-prescription medicine. 40% of Canadians said "advice of the pharmacist" vs. just 13% of Americans who said the same (globally, 27% of respondents gave this response).



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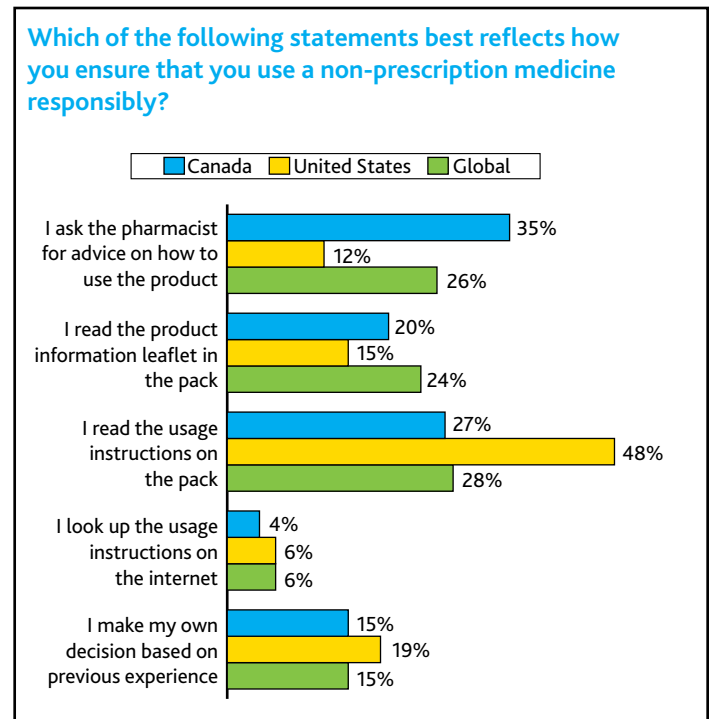
What other factors are important to Canadians? Effectiveness, safety and speed, in that order. 45% want to "know it works," 28% want to "know it's safe," and 22% want to "know it works quickly." But cost also seems to be a big deciding factor in selecting non-prescription medicine – 24% of Canadians mentioned "price," and another 17% said "value for money."

How much does marketing and brand awareness matter? The responses from Canadians are curious. While just 1% said that "advertising for the product" is a factor in their purchasing decisions, and only 5% said it's important that "the product is recognizable," 25% still want "a name that I trust."

## Using Medicine Responsibly

The reliance of Canadians on their pharmacist was also evident when consumers were asked how they ensure that they use non-prescription medicine responsibly.

35% of Canadians said they ask their pharmacist for advice on using the product, compared to just 12% of American consumers who said the same. In contrast, far fewer Canadians (27%) than Americans (48%) say they read the usage instructions on the package.



## Conclusion

Canadians can be classified as minimalists when it comes to self-medication, especially in tough economic times. When Canadians do reach for an over-the-counter treatment, we normally rely on the advice of a pharmacist to find a medication that is effective, fast, safe and offers value for the money.

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Survey conducted March, 2009.

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