

# The Self-Care Census 2024:

Consumer trends in self-treatable  
conditions, confidence and access





# Introduction

PAGB conducts an annual self-care survey to shine a light on the trends in self-treatable conditions, consumers' attitudes towards self-care and how they access health services.


Self-care is the actions that people take for themselves and their families to promote and maintain good health and well-being, and to take care of their self-treatable conditions. For this year's census we asked over 4,000 adults across the UK to share their experiences of self-care.


The 2024 census indicates that there are still high percentages of people choosing NHS primary care services for treatment of self-treatable conditions, with confidence in practicing self-care dropping amongst younger adults.


Only 32% of the youngest cohort (18-24 year olds) strongly agreed that they would choose to treat themselves at home or seek advice from a pharmacy rather than visiting the GP or A&E, however, this rises with age.

This concerning disparity between age groups suggests that younger generations are less likely to choose self-care to tackle their self-treatable conditions. In the future, this could lead to more pressure on NHS resources and supports the need for intervention to increase awareness about accessible information on the importance and methods of accessing trusted self-care advice.

On a positive note, the number of people who have been directed to self-care by their GP has risen significantly, with 75% of appointments for self-treatable conditions resulting in advice to use over-the-counter (OTC) medicines - a rise of 17 percentage points from last year.<sup>1</sup> In addition, more people this year are being directed to consult with their pharmacist for their self-treatable conditions, with 32% of adults - 8 percentage points more than last year<sup>1</sup> - confirming they have been advised to do so, either by their GP or NHS 111 services.

 **75%** of GP appointments for self-treatable conditions have resulted in advice to use OTC medicines

 **up 17 percentage points** from last year

 **9 in 10** adults say they feel confident using an OTC medicine to manage their symptoms


 Almost **3 in 4** adults surveyed would trust an OTC brand's website as a trusted source of information


We are also seeing a growing confidence and trust from people in over-the-counter products when it comes to self-care. 9 in 10 adults say they feel confident using and over-the-counter medicine to manage their symptoms, and almost 3 in 4 adults surveyed would trust an over-the-counter brand's website as a trusted source of health information.

Pharmacists remain trusted sources of health information amongst the public, yet we have seen a decline, which has played out over the last three years, in the number of people seeking their advice and treatment as a first step for a self-treatable condition, with just 52% of adults choosing this option. There is, however, a growing desire from the public to leverage the increasing capabilities of community pharmacists by enabling them to populate medical records and expanding the number of over-the-counter medicines they can provide as treatment for minor health conditions.

 **Every year at least 25 million, GP appointments** and **5 million A&E appointments** are used for self-treatable illnesses

Our findings show that whilst consumers want to embrace self-care by taking responsibility for their health and protecting NHS resources, there is a disparity between their willingness to self-care and the existing resources and services in place to support this. 70% of respondents had used the NHS website or app to search for healthcare information, yet an even higher percentage - 74% - thought the NHS should make it easier for people to care for themselves without using GP services or A&E. The data suggests that there is further opportunity to harness digital tools to empower self-care.

 **70%** of respondents had used the NHS website or app to search for healthcare information

 **74%** thought the NHS should make it easier for people to care for themselves without using GP services or A&E

At a time when the NHS is under immense pressure, self-care is a vital component of trying to reduce these pressures and building a sustainable healthcare system for the future. Every year at least 25 million GP appointments and 5 million A&E appointments are used for self-treatable illnesses. If people were empowered to self-care, it could save the NHS at least £1.7bn per year in costs.<sup>2</sup>

This report highlights the real-world data that makes the case for prioritising self-care and identifies the benefits it can provide by reducing demand on the NHS, reducing health inequalities among the public, and empowering people to take ownership of their own health.

1. <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2024/01/PAGB-Self-Care-Survey-2023.pdf>

2. The Economic Impact of Over-The-Counter Medicines in the UK, commissioned by PAGB and undertaken independently by Frontier Economics <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2023/07/20230712-Frontier-PAGB-OTC-Impact-Report-v1-0.pdf>



# SECTION 1: Common conditions

This year's census highlights the current trends in the ailments people are experiencing and the actions they are taking for their health, bringing to life the growing importance and need to empower self-care.

The data reveals that the top most-experienced self-treatable conditions have remained constant compared to the last few years. The common cold continues to impact more than half of us as the self-treatable condition experienced most, with 52% of adults confirming they have had a cold at least once in the last 12 months. Similarly, the other top self-treatable conditions people have experienced in previous years, which include headache, cough, blocked nose and backache, remain incredibly common and impact all adult age groups equally, from 18 to 65+.

GP and adviser to PAGB, Dr Binita Kalaria shares:

“This year's survey provides a good representation of the most common self-treatable conditions people experience each year, but a lot of these may not occur in isolation. Whilst we might just remember having had a cold, there are other symptoms that we may have experienced along with this, such as a headache or blocked nose, or we may have needed to treat a sore throat or skin rash as a result of allergies, so in reality the number of self-treatable conditions people experience each year is likely even higher. This is why a lot of over-the-counter medicines that people use to self-care and treat their symptoms may have several indications for use.

“Whether we are looking after ourselves by resting or taking over-the-counter medicines for our symptoms, we're practicing self-care and for many of these common conditions it's usually the best initial response we can take.”

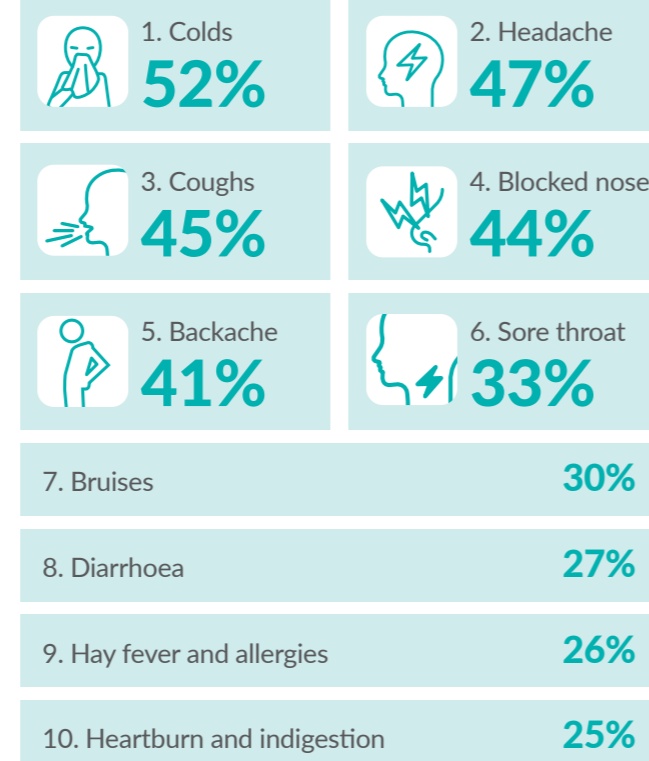


## Over two-thirds

of adults experienced three or more self-treatable conditions in the last year.

Many consumers experience several self-treatable conditions a year. This latest survey has revealed that over two-thirds of adults experienced three or more self-treatable conditions in the last year, and 7% of adults surveyed had experienced more than 10 self-treatable conditions in one year.

### The top ten common self-treatable conditions consumers experienced in the last 12 months:

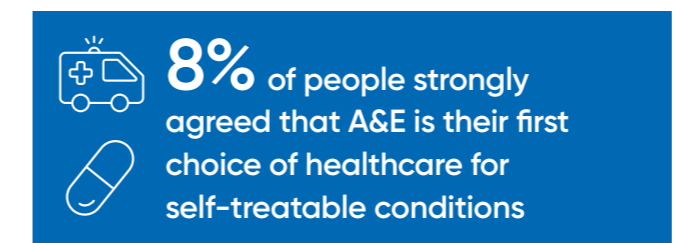


# SECTION 2: Actions taken

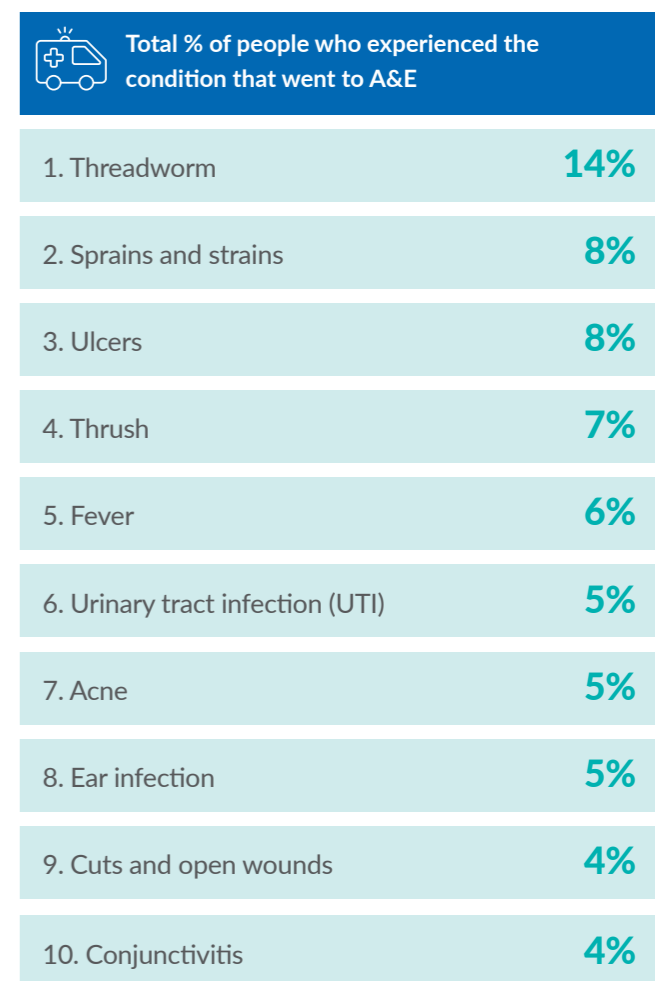
Consumers' healthcare choices reveal they continue to rely on primary care services as a first choice for treatment of minor health conditions, as we uncover an increasing trend in GPs directing people to self-care.

The real-world data from this survey indicates the actions we are choosing to take to treat our health and speaks to which minor conditions people have less confidence to self-care. According to a report published by Frontier Economics<sup>2</sup> in 2023, 64 million people experience at least one self-treatable illness per year in the UK. What we're seeing from this latest census supports the case that there is a further way to go to increase people's confidence to practice self-care for self-treatable conditions.

In line with our 2023 survey, we've found that the number of people relying on emergency healthcare for relatively minor health conditions has stayed constant, with 8% of people strongly agreeing that A&E is their first choice of healthcare for self-treatable conditions.



Threadworm, a condition which can be widely treated by over-the-counter medication that can be purchased in a pharmacy, was the condition that drove the most people who experienced it in the year to A&E, and we saw an increase in the number of people seeking advice and treatment from their GP for this ailment of 4 percentage points year on year.<sup>1</sup>



1. <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2024/01/PAGB-Self-Care-Survey-2023.pdf>

2. The Economic Impact of Over-The-Counter Medicines in the UK, commissioned by PAGB and undertaken independently by Frontier Economics  
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# SECTION 2: Actions taken


Total % of people who experienced the condition that sought advice from their GP


1. Urinary tract infection (UTI)	56%
2. Ear infection	53%
3. Menopause	36%
4. Erectile dysfunction	28%
5. Mild eczema, psoriasis and dermatitis	28%
6. Thrush	27%
7. Acne	20%
8. Conjunctivitis	20%
9. Sinusitis	19%
10. Ulcers	18%
11. Backache	17%
12. Earache	17%

We can also see a rise year on year in the number of consumers seeking GP appointments as a first port of call for urinary tract infections (UTIs), with over half of adults that experienced this condition confirming they sought a GP's advice or treatment – 56% in 2024 compared to 53% last year.<sup>1</sup>

Pharmacist, and adviser to PAGB, Mark Burdon says:

“Acute urinary tract infections (UTIs) are a common self-treatable condition, and they should be treated quickly and effectively to avoid discomfort and potential complications. Most women can recognise the symptoms of a urinary tract infection and know how their symptoms will progress. Often over-the-counter or prescription medications are the best way to self-care for this condition, but they can usually be provided by a community pharmacist rather than a GP. Through the Pharmacy First scheme in England, most women aged 16-64 can receive treatment from a pharmacist, often much quicker than they will be seen by a GP.”

 **75%** of adults with a self-treatable condition that sought advice from a GP were directed to use OTC medicines


 up **17** percentage points since last year

## However, it is backache – with just over 4 in 10 people experiencing this in the year – which was the self-treatable condition that the most adults in the survey sought GP advice for...

However, it is backache – with just over 4 in 10 people experiencing this in the year – which was the self-treatable condition that the most adults sought GP advice for, making up 10% of all the GP appointments sought by those surveyed.

Across all the self-treatable conditions that we surveyed, three quarters of cases where advice and treatment was sought from a GP were directed to use over-the-counter medications to self-care. This is a significant jump from last year's survey data with a rise from 58% in 2023 to 75% in 2024. Whilst this directive to self-care from healthcare professionals is a positive step forward, this new data supports the case that there is a rapidly increasing need to prioritise self-care education and awareness in the public's interest and to protect vital NHS resources by reducing the number of unnecessary GP appointments and A&E attendances.

In fact, 72% of adults had taken over-the-counter medicines between 1 and 10 times in the last year to self-care. For the most experienced self-treatable condition – the common cold – over half of adults chose to self-care using medicines bought over-the-counter.


 **72%** of adults had taken OTC medicines up to 10 times in the last year


This year's data also found that 32% of adults have been directed to consult with a pharmacist for their self-treatable condition, either by their GP or NHS 111 services, which has increased by 8 percentage points since last year.<sup>1</sup>

Mark Burdon adds:

“Pharmacists are often under-utilised as highly trained healthcare professionals, but they are an important pillar in the healthcare system, helping to protect NHS resources, as we can see by the number of patients that are being directed to our services.

“When patients need support to help them to make the right choice for their health, pharmacy teams are ideally placed to assist with that decision – it is what we do every day. We can provide detailed information about the over-the-counter medicines best suited to treat conditions, and in some cases, patients may not need medication. For example, for minor eye conditions a warm compress may be all that is needed.”

 **32%** of adults have been directed to consult with a pharmacist by a GP or NHS 111 about a self-treatable condition

 up **8** percentage points since last year



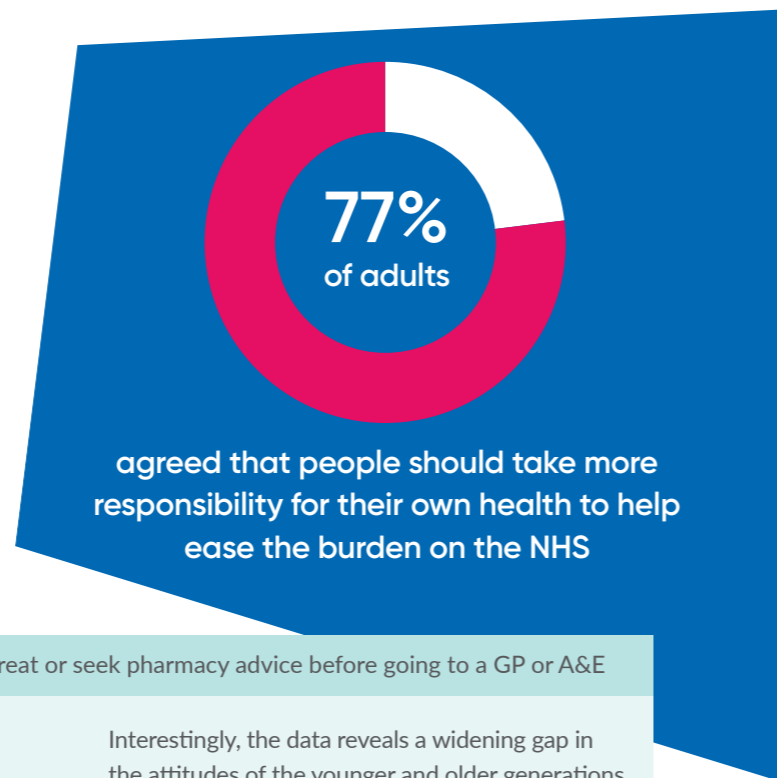
# SECTION 3: Attitudes and confidence

We look at how attitudes towards self-care are evolving, and how the confidence to choose self-care first, for common health conditions, differs between different age groups.

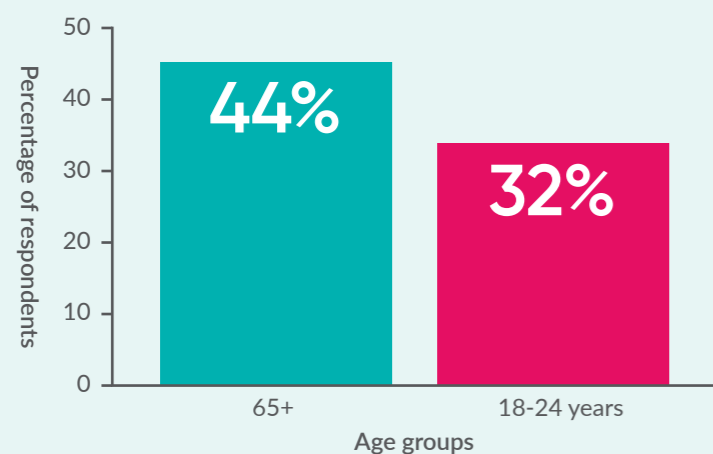
### Self-care certainty

Self-care empowers people to take a more proactive approach to treating their common health conditions. Almost 4 out of 5 adults (78%) suggested they would choose self-care as their first option when considering their approach to healthcare, a number which remains constant compared to last year's survey data.

The data also highlighted that over three quarters of adults (77%) agreed that people should take more responsibility for their own health to help ease the burden on the NHS. However, whilst there is a willingness from the public to embrace self-care, the data reveals that confidence in treating minor health conditions has dropped year on year, suggesting that we are losing some of the progress that was made to bolster confidence in self-care across the pandemic.



Comparison of respondents (by age group) that would self-treat or seek pharmacy advice before going to a GP or A&E

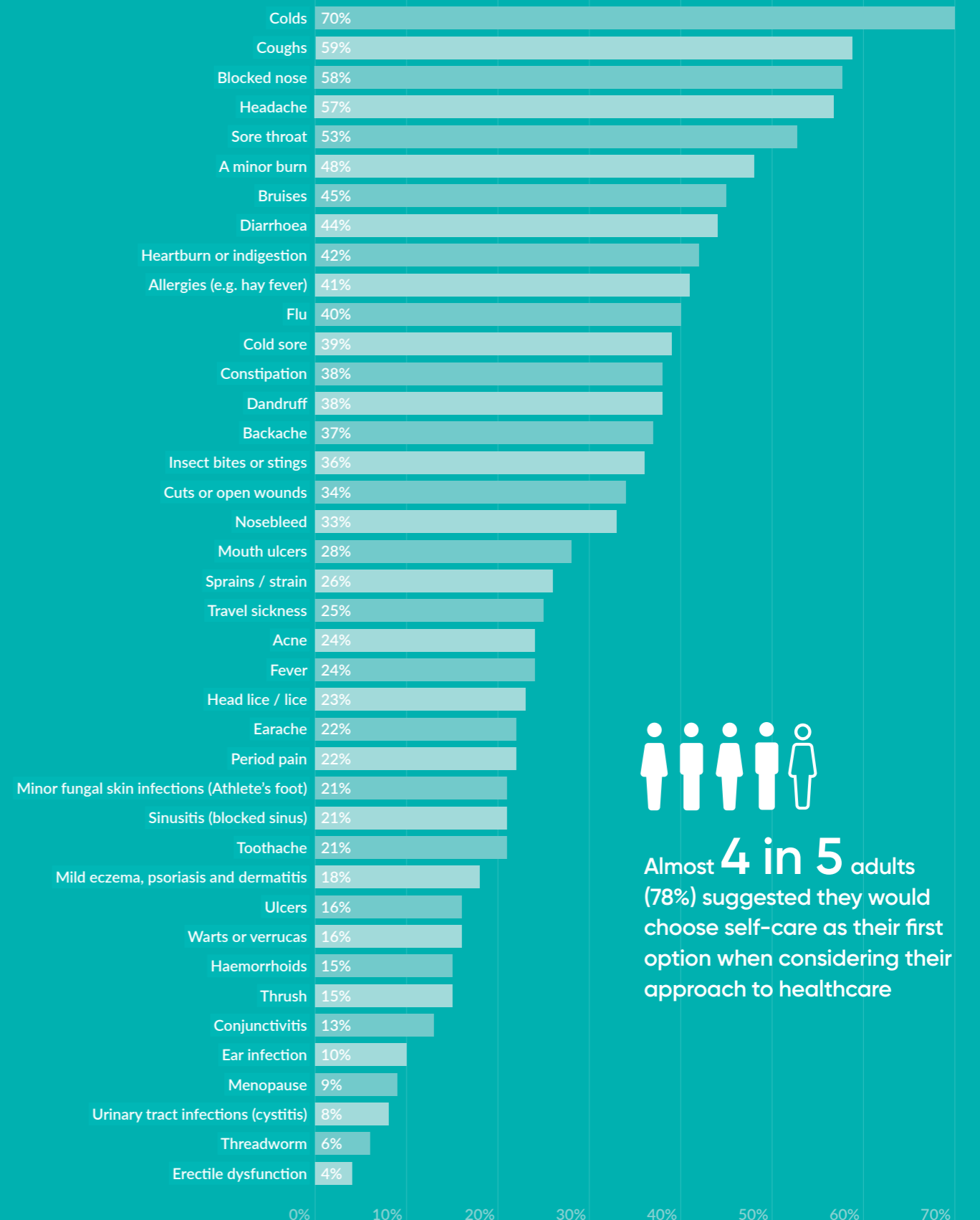


Interestingly, the data reveals a widening gap in the attitudes of the younger and older generations when it comes to self-care. When asked how strongly they agreed with the statement 'I choose self-care as my first option', adults over 65 years old were 12% more likely to agree than younger adults aged between 18-24 years old.

Of the same 18-24 year old cohort, only 32% strongly agreed that they would choose to treat themselves at home or seek advice from a pharmacy rather than visiting the GP or A&E, compared to 44% of those aged over 65.



We asked people what self-treatable conditions they felt confident in dealing with themselves.

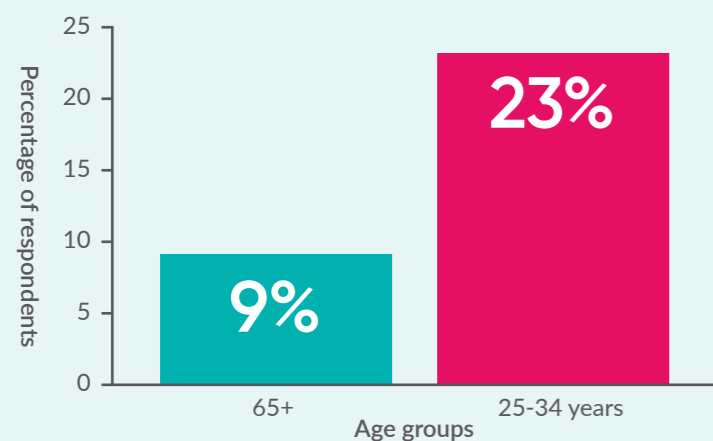


Almost **4 in 5** adults (78%) suggested they would choose self-care as their first option when considering their approach to healthcare



# SECTION 3: Attitudes and confidence

Comparison of respondents (by age group) that would contact their GP first for advice about a self-treatable condition



Only 9% of those aged 65 and over strongly agreed that they would choose to contact a GP for an appointment as their first option for a self-treatable condition, yet this rises to almost a quarter of those aged 25-34 years old (23%).

Dr Binita Kalaria shares:

“It is unsurprising that older patients, who may have more experience of a minor health condition having had it before, appear to feel more confident identifying when they can self-care or when they may need to see a GP. Younger patients aren’t always aware of the options they have to self-care and, where appropriate, we may direct them to use over-the-counter products to treat symptoms for self-treatable conditions, including common ailments such as acne, ear infections, and minor fungal infections like athlete’s foot, where we see higher rates of appointments made by younger adults for these conditions.”

We are, however, seeing a growth in confidence from people around using OTCs. 89% of adults say they would feel confident to take these medications to manage their symptoms, a rise of 8 percentage points compared to last year.<sup>1</sup>

**89%** of adults say they would feel confident to take OTC medications to manage their symptoms

up **8** percentage points from last year

## There is an increasing desire from consumers for more medicines to be made available over-the-counter.

There is also an increasing desire from consumers for more medicines to be made available over-the-counter. Almost 3 in 4 adults (74%) would like more medicines available from a pharmacy without a prescription, with calls for widened access to antibiotics, pain relief and over-the-counter medication for common self-treatable conditions such as acne and eczema.

Almost **3 in 4** adults (74%) would like more medicines available from a pharmacy without a prescription

Michelle Riddalls, CEO at PAGB, says:

“Increasing switching of prescription only medicines to pharmacy medicines not only improves people’s choice and access to their treatment, but it can also benefit the healthcare system more broadly.

“Greater availability of over-the-counter medicines means fewer GP visits, A&E interactions and the potential to prevent self-treatable conditions worsening with early intervention through self-care. For every 5% of total NHS prescribing and spending that could be switched to over-the-counter medicines, the NHS could save £1.4bn.<sup>2</sup>”

For every **5%** of total NHS prescribing and spending that could be switched to OTC medicines, the NHS could save **£1.4bn**

1. <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2024/01/PAGB-Self-Care-Survey-2023.pdf>

2. The Economic Impact of Over-The-Counter Medicines in the UK, commissioned by PAGB and undertaken independently by Frontier Economics <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2023/07/20230712-Frontier-PAGB-OTC-Impact-Report-v1-0.pdf>



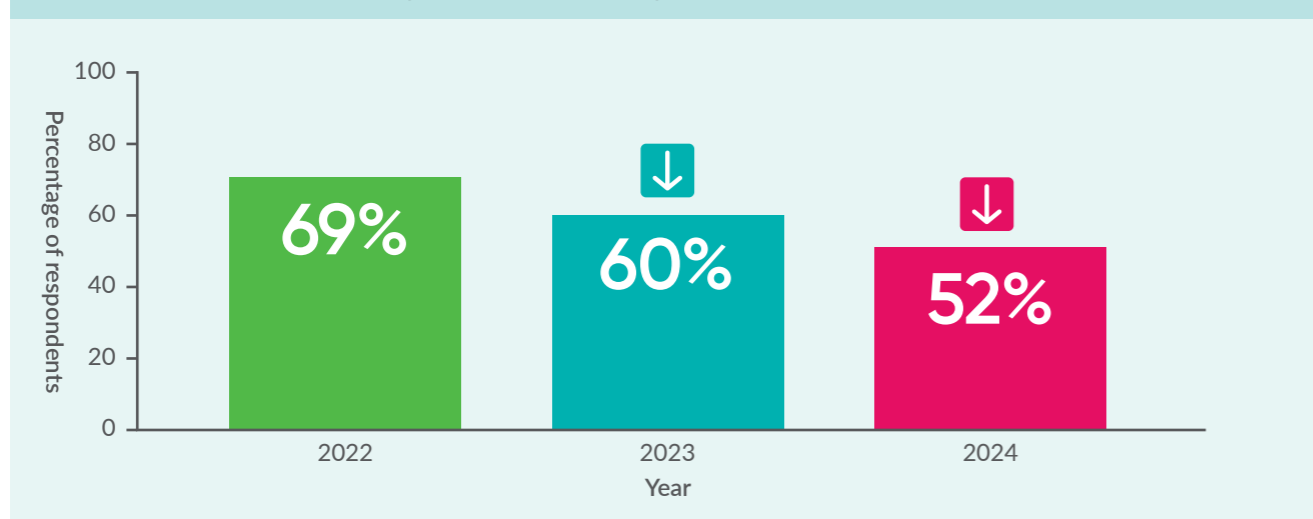
# SECTION 3: Attitudes and confidence

## The function of pharmacy

Self-care is not the absence of care, and it may involve support and advice from others. Community pharmacists are integral to ensuring a supportive self-care environment, providing people with specialist support and advice on the most suitable and effective over-the-counter treatments as well as equipping people with the information and tools they need to self-care. This is evidenced in this year's survey by 76% of adults saying that they see their pharmacist as a trusted health information source.

However, pharmacists are often under-utilised as highly-trained healthcare experts. Whilst people trust them to provide healthcare information, there is a decline in the number of people who would choose to see their pharmacist as a first step in seeking medical advice for self-treatable conditions. Almost half of adults surveyed this year would not seek advice from their pharmacist as a first port of call, with 17% saying they would rather go straight to a GP in case their condition was serious, a statistic that has remained steady year on year.

% of adults who visit a pharmacist as a first step for medical advice for a self-treatable condition



**76%** of adults said they see their pharmacist as a trusted health information source

**17%** of adults said they would rather go straight to a GP in case their condition was serious

## There is a decline in the number of people who would choose to see their pharmacist as a first step in seeking medical advice for self-treatable conditions.

Mark Burdon adds:

*“It is concerning to see that fewer people are seeking advice from pharmacists year on year – it feels like we’ve lost some of the progress that was made during the COVID-19 pandemic to drive confidence in the healthcare services and self-care support available outside of GP surgeries and hospitals.”*

*“Pharmacies are often much more accessible with longer hours than GP surgeries and are often open at the weekends. Over 99% of those living in areas of the highest deprivation are within a 20-minute walk of a community pharmacy<sup>3</sup> making the medicines available at pharmacies an accessible resource for people with health concerns.”*

Other factors that would encourage more people to visit pharmacies include increased privacy to consult with a pharmacist, with over a third of adults saying this would mean they are more likely to ask their pharmacist for advice. Additionally, there are calls for better remote access to pharmacists' advice with a total of 35% of adults saying they would like to be able to speak to their pharmacist on the phone or via video call.

To some extent, many pharmacies in the UK already offer these services, with private consultation rooms and the option to speak with a pharmacist remotely, which suggests there is a compelling opportunity to enhance public awareness of comprehensive primary care services through further education, such as a national campaign to widen knowledge about Pharmacy First.

Fully integrating pharmacy's role in primary care is vital in creating a supportive self-care environment. The Pharmacy First scheme, introduced in England at the beginning of 2024, has been a positive step in this direction, however, with 46% of those surveyed in this census unaware of the scheme and that they can receive prescription treatment from community pharmacists for some common conditions, there's a way to go to increase education and awareness.

The data from the survey helps to showcase the growing support for change and integrating the role of pharmacy in primary care. The number of people who agree that pharmacists should be able to update medical records to include any advice they have given or treatment they have recommended has increased to 73% in 2024 (from 65% in 2023). There is an opportunity here to drive more people to self-care with support from community pharmacists; 16% of adults surveyed said that if their pharmacist was able to fully access and update their medical records, they would be more likely to consult them as a first step to treat a minor health condition.

**73%** of people agreed pharmacists should be able to update medical records to include their advice and/or treatment recommendations

↑ up from **65%** in 2023

**35%** of adults said they would like to be able to speak to their pharmacist on the phone or via video call

3. <https://cpe.org.uk/learn-more-about-community-pharmacy/the-value-of-pharmacy/>



# SECTION 4: Access

From difficulty accessing GP appointments to seeking relevant self-care advice on the NHS website and app, we review what is impacting people's access to healthcare, both in person and online.


## Acquiring appointments and prescriptions

Self-care can help to narrow health inequalities and improve outcomes by equipping people across all socioeconomic groups with the tools to treat themselves effectively and appropriately where possible.

Primary care services are under increasing pressure with a GP shortage in England<sup>4</sup> and we're seeing the knock-on effect across this year's survey data with the number of people struggling to access appointments. Over a third (36%) of those who sought GP advice and treatment for a self-treatable condition found it difficult to get an appointment, which has risen by 6 percentage points in the year.<sup>1</sup>

This is driving more people to choose self-care to maintain their health, with 45% saying that their ability to access a GP appointment has impacted their decision to self-care. In fact, over three quarters of adults (77%) agree that people need to take more responsibility for their own health to ease the burden on the NHS, and around four in five people (79%) agree that A&E and GP appointments should only be used when absolutely essential.

 **36%** of those who sought GP advice and treatment for a self-treatable condition found it difficult to get an appointment

 up **6** percentage points from last year

However, as we have seen in this year's data, younger generations are still likely to choose to seek GP advice with 23% of 25-34 year-olds opting for a GP appointment as their first consideration when they experience a self-treatable condition. This would suggest there is a disconnect between people being willing to self-care to reduce pressures on the NHS, and having the awareness of the tools, resources and alternative primary care services in place to support this.

Cost-of-living continues to play a challenging role in people's access to healthcare as well. With the current NHS prescription charge costing £9.90 per item, 44% of all adults surveyed said cost-of-living had impacted their ability to pay for prescription medications, with almost one in ten (9%) asking their pharmacist to recommend cheaper over-the-counter alternatives.

 **44%** of adults surveyed said cost-of-living had impacted their ability to pay for prescription medications


## With GP appointments becoming more difficult to obtain for self-treatable conditions, many people are turning to digital sources for healthcare information.


### Accessing NHS online resources

With GP appointments becoming more difficult to obtain for self-treatable conditions, many people are turning to digital sources for healthcare information and advice to support their self-care. The NHS website and app were used by 70% of adults surveyed in the past 12 months to find out information about a self-treatable condition, and 9 out of 10 people said they would use these tools again.

However, it is evident that there is still a way to go to make self-care more accessible by harnessing digital tools. Of the 8% of people who said that they would not use the NHS website again, many gave reasons such as it is difficult to navigate, they couldn't find what they were looking for or that there was not enough advice on what to do to self-care. Furthermore, nearly three in four people (74%) surveyed agreed that the NHS should make it easier for people to care for themselves without using GP services or A&E.

This corroborates PAGB's digital audit report published in 2023<sup>5</sup> which found that individuals are not being effectively directed to self-care advice via these tools when it is most appropriate, placing undue burden on in-person services.


 **70%** of adults said they had used the NHS website and app in the last 12 months to find out about a self-treatable condition

 **9 out of 10** said they would use these tools again

### Michelle Riddalls added:

*“Our research published last year highlighted that use of digital tools, such as the NHS website and NHS 111 phone service, is increasing year on year, and yet people often feel overwhelmed by the amount of digital content available and don't always know which sources are trustworthy.”*

*“To better support people with the tools to self-care, we have recommended the development of a self-care hub accessible via the NHS app and website which includes a library of accredited and trusted health apps, alongside information on self-care and accessing appropriate over-the-counter medicines, so people can be reassured that they are accessing reliable, accurate and useful information.”*

 **Nearly 3 in 4** people (74%) agreed that the NHS should make it easier for people to care for themselves without using GP services or A&E

1. <https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2024/01/PAGB-Self-Care-Survey-2023.pdf>

4. <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice-and-support/nhs-delivery-and-workforce/pressures/pressures-in-general-practice-data-analysis>

5. Unleashing the potential of digital tools to support self-care - [https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2023/09/20230925\\_Digital-Self-care-Audit-2.0.pdf](https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2023/09/20230925_Digital-Self-care-Audit-2.0.pdf)





# SECTION 5: Support for self-care

With this year's census uncovering gaps in consumers attitudes and access to self-care, we explore what opportunities there are to further empower people to choose self-care for self-treatable conditions.

## Education empowers

There is limited awareness of self-treatable conditions in the UK with over half of adults sharing that they don't feel confident treating the majority of the conditions we surveyed in this year's census. Only 4% of those surveyed would feel confident treating erectile dysfunction, and 8% would be confident self-caring for a UTI; both of these conditions can be effectively managed for most people though medicines which community pharmacists can provide along with advice and support.

Across this year's data, we can also see a divide in age groups accessing information to self-care, which corresponds with the steps they are taking to care for their self-treatable conditions. 75% of adults aged 65 and over said that they have enough information on self-care treatments, but this drops to just 58% of those aged 18-24 years old. This is also reflected in the different responses from socioeconomic groups, with one third of people from lower income households sharing that they don't have access to enough information on how to self-care.

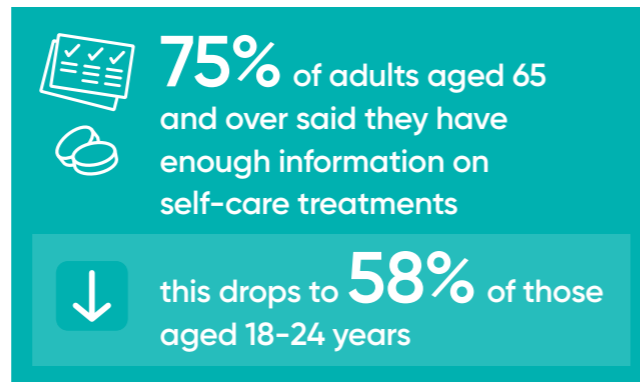
Education and awareness are key to increasing the number of people practising self-care. Improving health literacy – which is simply having the combination of reading and listening skills and understanding of data that is needed to make informed health decisions – will also have a much wider impact on an individual's health and wellbeing.

Of the adults surveyed in this year's census, 64% thought that it was the responsibility of the NHS to educate people about self-care, with over half (54%) suggesting that secondary schools in the UK should provide self-care education.

Michelle Riddalls adds:

“As is evident from this year's census data, there's a growing need to increase awareness and trust in self-care. Educating the public about comprehensive primary care services, which includes the role that pharmacies can play as well as the self-care resources available to all of us, is essential.

“With over half of people agreeing that schools should be responsible for providing self-care education, integrating this into the school curriculum will help to empower students with essential knowledge and skills to manage their health effectively. Instilling a confidence and trust in self-care that the younger generations can carry with them through life is an important investment in the future of our healthcare system.”



# Harnessing digital tools also presents an opportunity to reach younger audiences, who are less likely to choose self-care as their first option.

## Click to self-care

Digital tools are also an important resource to support education and awareness about self-treatable conditions and direct people to self-care information. They can help bridge the divide between all social backgrounds, providing easy-to-access information in consumer-friendly language. In fact, almost six in ten adults (59%) have used the internet to look up symptoms of a self-treatable condition that they have experienced.

However, with 40% of people saying they feel overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information available digitally, and the same number (40%) saying they don't know what online health information they can believe, there's still a further way to go to ensure confidence in digital self-care tools.

Accessing trusted self-care advice has never been more important. We know, thanks to research by the Organisation for the Review of Care and Health Apps (ORCHA) that 68% of people want digital health apps to be used in the NHS.<sup>6</sup>

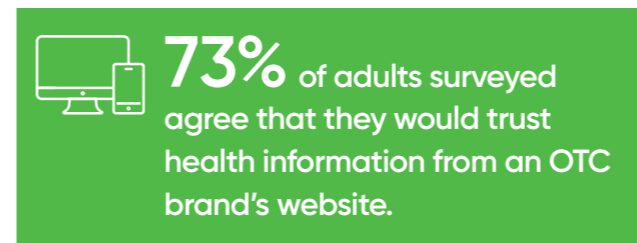
Michelle Riddalls shares how this can be amplified

by the OTC industry.

“Many manufacturers of OTC brands have already invested in digital tools, such as websites accessible by mobile, tablet and desktop, and apps developed to be used in conjunction with products. One such example would be the Nicorette® Stop Smoke & Vape app, an innovative digital tool to help people to stop smoking and which accompanies their smoking cessation product.

“All of these resources from OTC brands provide important digital support for self-care. Written in consumer-friendly accessible language, brands' websites and apps often hold a lot of education and information about self-treatable conditions, as well as providing advice and direction on where to go for support and help, and how to self-care. In fact, the data from this year's census has revealed that 73% of adults surveyed agree that they would trust health information from an OTC brand's website.”

Harnessing digital tools also presents an opportunity to reach younger audiences, who are less likely to choose self-care as their first option for treating a minor health condition. 43% of 18-24 year olds surveyed agreed that they would trust health information shared on social media, across channels such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. In this instance, there is an opportunity for the NHS to work with OTC brands, that have built trust and loyalty with consumers, to ensure access to reliable, accurate and useful information across these channels which complies with advertising regulations and shares trusted self-care advice.



6. <https://www.digitalhealth.net/2023/07/majority-of-public-want-digital-health-apps-to-be-used-in-nhs/>



# Conclusion

Conducting this yearly census to uncover consumer trends in ailments, attitudes to self-care, and healthcare access provides us with valuable information and insights into how self-care can be integrated into the recovery of primary care in a real way that resonates with consumers.

Michelle Riddalls, CEO at PAGB, summarises:

“Self-care doesn’t just make good sense, it’s integral to building a sustainable healthcare system for the future. Self-care empowers consumers with the knowledge and routes to treatment for self-treatable conditions and enables them to take control of their own health and wellbeing.

“For the NHS, self-care can help to reduce the pressures they face across GP surgeries and A&E departments and save them at least £1.7bn each year in avoidable appointment and prescription costs for self-treatable conditions.<sup>1</sup>

“Not only this, but analysis from Frontier Economics in 2023 found that wider use of self-care can also support the UK economy with the potential to save an additional £350m per year as employees would not need to take time out from work for unnecessary NHS treatment.<sup>1</sup> The potential reach and impact of self-care is huge.”

We’ve seen a willingness from consumers, evidenced in real-world data from our surveys across the last few years, to take control of their health and embrace self-care. However, with this year’s survey highlighting that there is a concerning uptick in younger generations feeling less confident and well-equipped to self-care, there’s more that needs to be done to create a supportive environment where everyone can access the information they need to make informed decisions about their healthcare.

As this year’s survey data has shown, we don’t yet have the right infrastructure and tools in place to support people’s confidence and help them to practice self-care for self-treatable conditions.


Michelle share’s how this can be achieved:


“The evidence from this survey showcases the support people want to see in place for self-care, and working with government, policymakers and regulators, we need to ensure self-care is prioritised.

“Firstly, by improving patient awareness of and confidence to self-care. This is where a national campaign, taking into account variable levels of health literacy, can increase public education and trust in the full range of primary care services.

“Secondly, by leveraging digital tools to better support and promote self-care we can make information on self-care for minor ailments easily accessible via the NHS website and app, as well as utilising integrated care systems digital resources.

“And finally, we can create a supportive self-care environment by fully integrating pharmacy’s role in primary care and remaining a leader in the reclassification of medicines. Now is the time to capitalise on the very real opportunities in reach to realise the full potential of self-care.”

 **£350m** each year could potentially be saved through wider use of self-care, saving employees taking time out from work for unnecessary NHS treatment<sup>2</sup>



“Self-care doesn’t just make good sense, it’s integral to building a sustainable healthcare system for the future. Self-care empowers consumers with the knowledge and routes to treatment for self-treatable conditions and enables them to take control of their own health and wellbeing.”

Michelle Riddalls, CEO at PAGB

2. The Economic Impact of Over-The-Counter Medicines in the UK, commissioned by PAGB and undertaken independently by Frontier Economics  
<https://www.pagb.co.uk/content/uploads/2023/07/20230712-Frontier-PAGB-OTC-Impact-Report-v1-0.pdf>

# The Self-Care Census 2024:

Consumer trends in self-treatable conditions, confidence and access



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