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COVID-19 Drives UK Consumers To Pharmacy And E-Commerce – J&J Survey

by [David Ridley](#)

UK consumers are looking to pharmacy for help with selecting OTCs during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as turning increasingly to e-commerce, finds a recent survey by Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health.

Over half of UK consumers are looking to community pharmacists to provide advice about OTC healthcare products during the coronavirus pandemic, a recent survey by Johnson & Johnson Consumer Health shows.

Published to coincide with World Pharmacists' Day, J&J's survey of 1,113 UK adults aged 16-75 found that this percentage rose to 68% for consumers in the 45-54 age bracket.

Drilling down into specific needs that consumers associated with pharmacy, the survey discovered that:

- 43% of consumers expected community pharmacists to provide advice on how to treat specific everyday health concerns such as coughs and colds, smoking cessation or skin dryness;
- 43% went to pharmacy for guidance about health topics they would normally consult the doctor about and/or advice about protection from COVID-19;
- and 32% used pharmacy to access to vaccinations and 27% for access to diagnostics.

J&J's survey also revealed that pharmacists would have an important part to play as the UK enters the winter season, especially with the possibility of a second lockdown now being mooted by the country's government.

On average, only 25% of UK consumers are very confident that the healthcare products they have at home are sufficient if they or family members are unwell, the survey found, with only 34% confident that the products are within expiry dates and only 33% that the products are stored in line with package instructions.

“The role of community pharmacy has never been more important,” commented J&J Consumer Health’s EMEA area managing director, Carlton Lawson. “Today’s consumers are seeking informed advice on healthcare topics, and pharmacists play a critical role as front-line health professionals.”

E-Commerce Shift

But it’s not all good news for the UK’s community pharmacists. According to J&J’s research, COVID-19 has also driven an acceleration toward e-commerce, with 31% of UK consumers now purchasing healthcare products online, rising to 42% in the 25-34 age range.

“Consumer purchasing habits changed significantly before and during lockdown, but not just in terms of online or in-person buying,” explained J&J Consumer Health’s customer development vice-president Carlos Olmos.

“Pre-lockdown we noted two-to-five-fold higher demand for some of our products due to panic-buying, followed by increased purchasing in categories such as hand moisturizers, up 15-20% and mouth wash up 5-10% depending on the market throughout lockdown.”

“This increase reflects greater attention paid to oral health in the extended period between dental visits during lockdown,” Olmos noted, “and to dry skin linked to frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizers.”

To address the clear shift to e-commerce, J&J said it was “actively supporting pharmacists in the UK to leverage digital engagement to improve the healthcare advice provided to their customers.”