

Self-Medication with Herbal Medicinal Products in Europe: Bridging Industry Market Data and Independent Prevalence Research

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Self-medication with herbal medicinal products is a substantial and growing component of self-care across Europe, regulated in the EU mainly via the Traditional Herbal Medicinal Products Directive (2004/24/EC) and HMPC monographs, alongside both industry market data and independent population-based research. The European self-care market reached €250 billion in 2025, according to a 2026 IQVIA analysis commissioned by AESGP [1]. Independent epidemiological data from the European Health Interview Survey indicate that 34.3% of the EU population practiced self-medication within a two-week period [2]. Herbal medicine use specifically shows even greater heterogeneity: a systematic review of national surveys reports traditional and complementary medicine use, including herbal products, ranging from 24% to 71.3% across European countries [3]. A recent review of clinical studies on herbal medicines approved in Europe concludes that they are generally well tolerated with a favorable benefit-risk profile for non-life-threatening ailments [4], and qualitative research suggests that users often perceive them similarly, using them as a first-line option before considering conventional medicine [5]. By integrating industry market data, independent prevalence data, and evidence on user motivations, this presentation aims to characterize current patterns and drivers of herbal self-medication in Europe, revealing sustained consumer demand alongside considerable cross-country variability. Combining these market, epidemiological, and qualitative perspectives, together with the regulatory context, offers a more complete evidence base for understanding herbal self-medication as an expression of self-directed health care in Europe.

References

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