



A Survey on the Understanding and Practice of Self-Medication among College Students

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ABSTRACT:

Self-medication is increasingly prevalent among college students due to the easy availability of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs and the widespread access to health information online. This research seeks to evaluate the knowledge, practices, and attitudes toward self-medication among students from various academic disciplines in Navi Mumbai. A structured questionnaire was shared via Google Forms, and responses from 20 participants were analyzed. Findings indicated that while most students are familiar with the concept of self-medication and are aware of certain risks, many still engage in it for minor health issues such as headaches, colds, and stomach discomfort. Frequently used medications included vitamins, pain relievers, and antibiotics—often taken without professional medical advice. Most students reported obtaining these drugs from local pharmacies. Although many participants claimed to read the usage instructions, a significant portion remained unaware of the potential serious side effects. The study concludes that, despite a basic level of awareness, unsafe self-medication practices and misunderstandings continue to persist.

Keywords: Self-medication, Drug safety, Awareness, Antibiotic misuse, OTC medicines

INTRODUCTION

Self-medication means using medicines to treat health problems without a doctor's advice. While it might give quick relief, it can also cause serious issues like side effects, wrong doses, or antibiotic resistance. College students often do this because they can easily get OTC medicines and online health information. This study looks at how much students know about self-medication, what they commonly do, and their attitudes toward it. The goal is to find out where awareness is lacking and if better health education is needed.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey was conducted using a Google Form containing 15 questions. The form was distributed to college students from various academic backgrounds, including pharmacy, science, commerce, and medical fields. A total of 20 students participated in the study. The questionnaire covered areas such as:

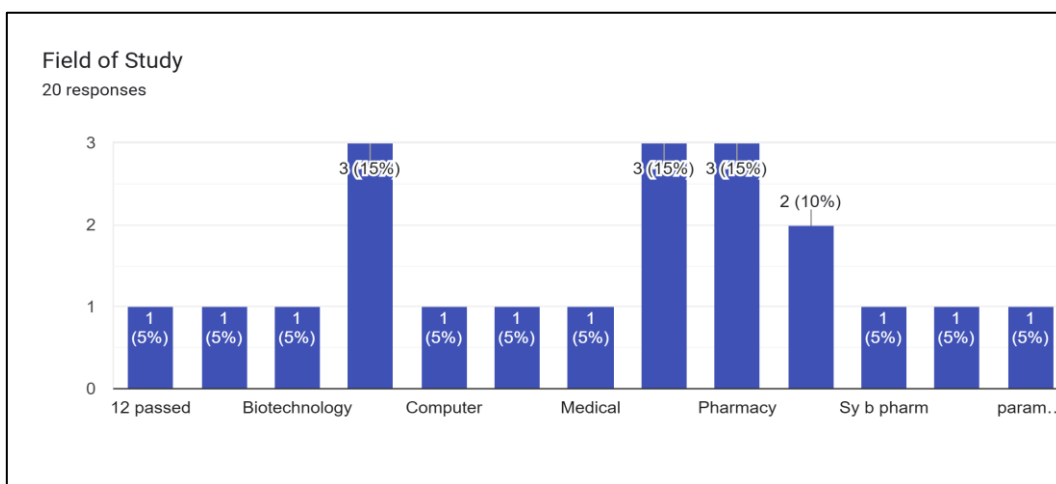
- Basic demographic information
- Understanding of self-medication
- Common self-medication practices
- Sources of medication
- Perceptions regarding the safety of self-medication

The responses were analyzed using percentage calculations and presented visually through bar graphs and pie charts.

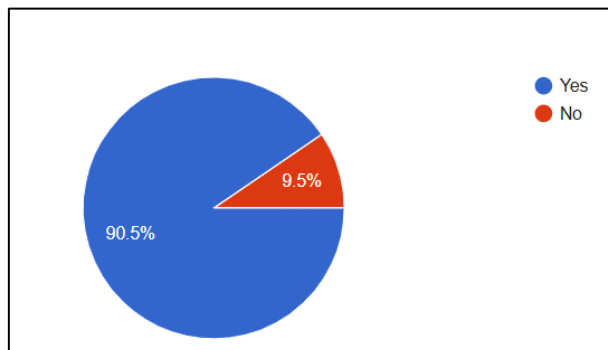


Results:

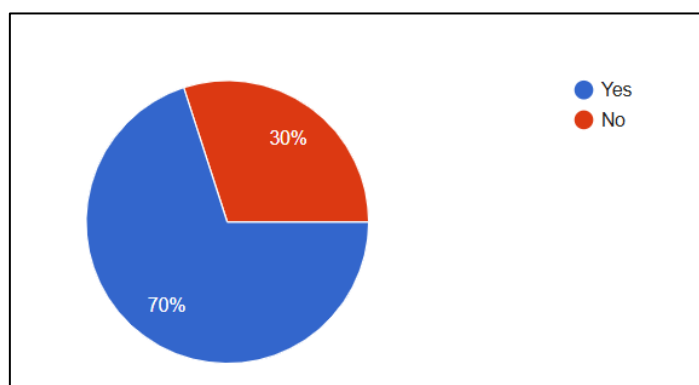
Approximately 90% of the students were familiar with the term "self-medication." While most recognized the associated risks, a few remained uncertain. Vitamins and painkillers were widely viewed as safe, whereas a small but notable group mistakenly believed antibiotics were also safe for self-use. The majority reported using self-medication occasionally or infrequently, mainly for common issues like headaches, colds, and stomach aches. Most students purchased their medicines from local pharmacies, though some relied on leftover drugs at home or family supplies. While many stated they read the instructions before use, a portion of participants were either unaware or unclear about the potential dangers of self-medicating.



1. Have you heard the term "self-medication"?

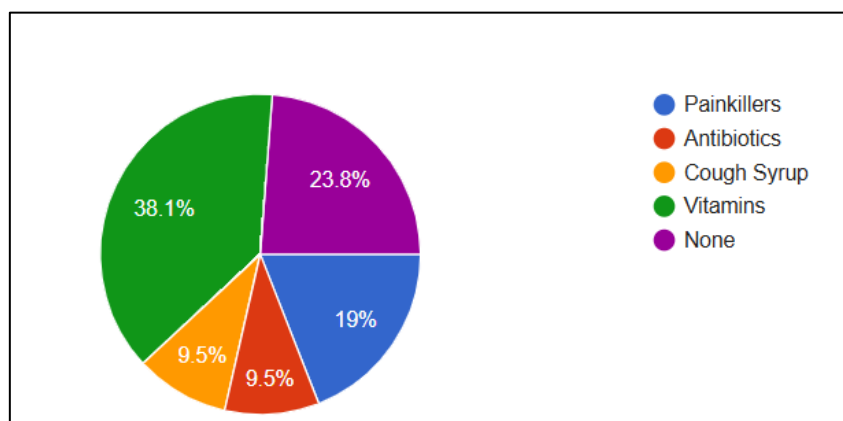


2. Do you know the risks involved in taking medicines without a prescription?



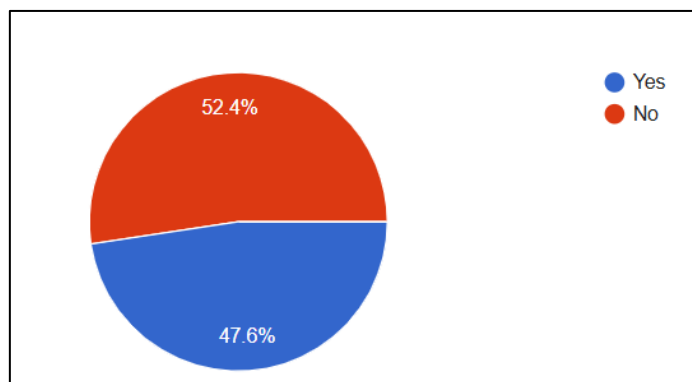


3. Which medicines do you think are safe for self-medication?

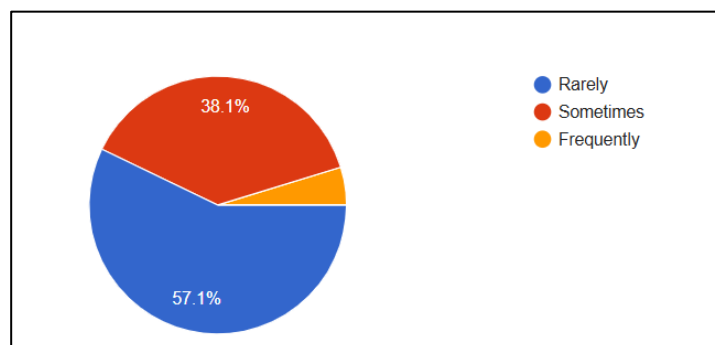


Drug Type	Number of Students	Percentage
Vitamins	8	38.1%
Painkillers	4	19%
Cough Syrups	2	9.5%
Antibiotics	2	9.5%
None	4	23.8%

4. Have you ever taken medicines without consulting a doctor?



5. How often do you self-medicate?

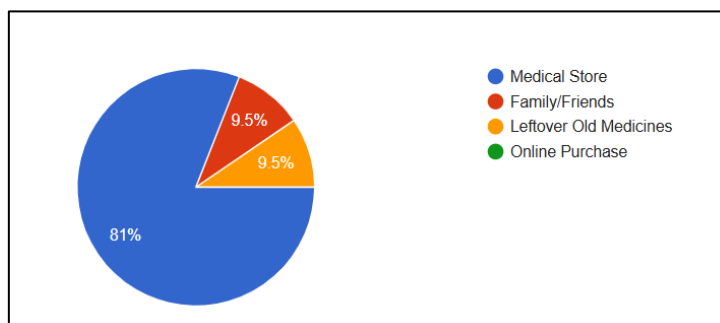




6. For which health problems do you usually self-medicate?

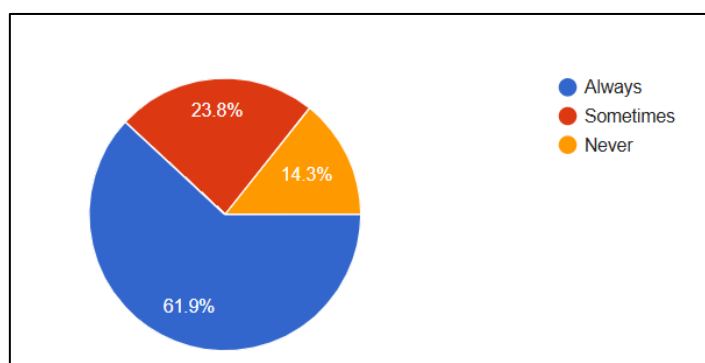
Illness	Number of Students	Percentage
Headache	14	66.7%
Cold & Cough	8	38.1%
Stomach Pain	3	14.3%
Fever	3	14.3%

7. Where do you usually get medicines for self-medication?

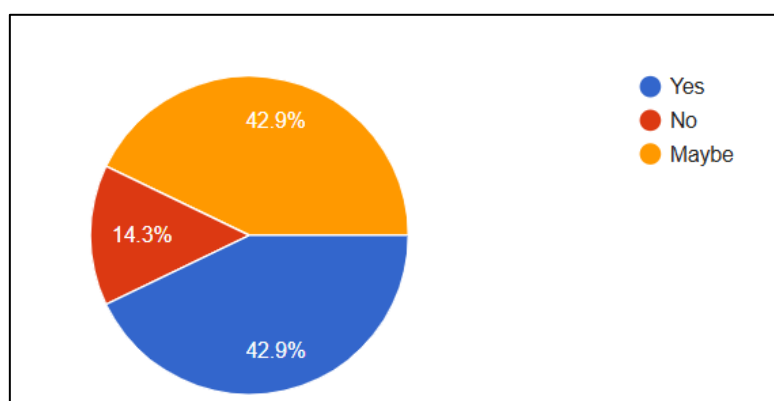


Source	Number of Students	Percentage
Medical Store	16	80%
Family/Friends	2	10%
Leftover Old Medicines	2	10%

8. Do you read the instructions before taking medicines?



9. Do you believe self-medication is dangerous?





DISCUSSION

The survey shows that college students mostly understand self-medication, but many still use antibiotics without proper advice, which is risky. Misusing antibiotics can cause bacteria to become drug resistant. Students mainly self-medicate for minor problems like headaches and colds, but self-diagnosis can lead to taking the wrong medicine or dose. Many buy medicines easily from medical stores without prescriptions, and some use leftover or shared medicines, which can be dangerous. Although most students read medicine instructions, they don't always follow them carefully. This shows a gap between what students know and how they actually use medicines. To make self-medication safer, more education and stricter rules are needed.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that although college students are generally aware of self-medication, many still engage in unsafe practices, such as using antibiotics without prescriptions. This behavior can lead to serious health risks, including drug resistance and incorrect treatment. Therefore, immediate steps must be taken to promote safe and responsible use of medicines.

STRATEGIES TO MINIMIZE SELF-MEDICATION:

1. **Organize awareness programs** in colleges to educate students on the dangers of self-medication.
2. **Include topics on rational drug use** in the academic curriculum, especially in pharmacy and health-related courses.
3. **Regulate over-the-counter sales** to ensure that restricted medicines like antibiotics are not sold without a valid prescription.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: All authors have nothing else to disclose.

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