# Self-care and health literacy

## Positioning pharmacists as accessible primary health care providers

Access to self-care microsite

***WHO defines self-care as the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote and maintain their own health, prevent disease and cope with illness, with or without the support of a health or care worker[1]. Pharmacies are usually the first contact point with healthcare systems and a big part of primary health care in many countries.***

[1] *World Health Organization. Self-care for health and well-being. Geneva: World Health Organization; [cited 14 July 2026]. Available from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/self-care*

## Pharmacists' role

**Findings from our global needs assessment surveys indicate that pharmacists support responsible self-care through health promotion, management of common ailments, treatment optimisation, strengthening of health literacy, referral to other professionals, collaboration across healthcare teams, and contribution to public policy development.**

These findings further identify scope for advancement and opportunities to strengthen this support, particularly in areas of greater clinical complexity and specialised care.

## FIP's role

**FIP promotes pharmacists' role in self-care through global advocacy and partnerships, support tools for safe triage, OTC selection, counselling, and referral, and the collection of evidence on pharmacy services through multinational needs assessments and the FIP Impact Database (ID). FIP self-care programmes:**

- Self-care and *sexual health*
- Self-care and *digestive health*
- Self-care and *respiratory health*
- Self-care and *pain management*
- Self-care and *oral health*

## FIP Development Goals

*FIP Development Goal 15* (People-centred care) reflects pharmacists' role in supporting person-centred self-care by helping people make safe decisions, recognise warning signs, and use medicines appropriately.

*FIP Development Goal 18* (Access to medicines, devices and services) reflects pharmacists' contribution to access through safe use of medicines and services, and guidance to the right level of care when escalation is needed.

## Key findings

- Respondents feel more prepared to support common and frequently encountered self-care needs than more specialised areas of practice.
- Self-care consultations in pharmacy practice are primarily driven by common acute conditions, particularly pain, fever, respiratory symptoms, and gastrointestinal complaints.
- There is a perceived need for support in areas involving higher clinical risk, age-specific considerations, and more complex patient needs.
- Preferred learning formats include face-to-face workshops (52%) and online self-paced learning (49%), reflecting demand for both interactive and flexible approaches.

## Key reports

**Key multinational needs assessment reports are:**




**Community pharmacy insights: Supporting the need for self-care (2023):** Explored how pharmacy teams support self-care through consultations, adherence support, lifestyle advice, digital tools, and training needs.




**Pharmacy-based point-of-care testing (POCT) global intelligence report (2023):** Examined the global landscape of POCT services, including service delivery models, regulation, remuneration, data sharing, barriers, and opportunities.




**Pharmacist-led common ailments schemes (CAS) global intelligence report (2023):** Assessed how CAS programmes operate globally, covering service scope, regulation, training, remuneration, and factors supporting successful implementation.




**Pharmacists supporting self-care and universal health coverage: A snapshot of current practice and needs. FIP MNAP (2026):** Explored the current practice and the role of pharmacists in self-care within community pharmacy and primary health care settings, and identified key gaps and support needs to strengthen pharmacy's contribution to self-care.