

Over Half of Adults Have Looked Online for Medical Information

Tuesday 17 June, 2014

More than half of adults in the UK have used a search engine to look for medical information, according to a new online survey commissioned by [Health-on-Line](#).

The YouGov poll, which quizzed people on how often they visit their doctors and which alternatives they use, revealed that 53% have used internet search as a source of medical information, while 47% have used an online medical resource.

Over three-quarters (78%) of those who have used the internet or a smartphone/ tablet app to get medical information said it was the fastest option.

Although qualified doctors and pharmacists would be the most popular sources of medical information, used by 76% and 64% respectively, the findings suggest that web-based resources are growing in popularity, particularly among the younger generation.

The 18 to 24-year-old age group were the least likely to visit a doctor (67%) or pharmacist (47%) and the most likely to use online medical resources (64%), as well as being the most likely to use social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter as a source for medical information (4%).

Of those who have used the internet or a smartphone/tablet app to find medical information, the majority (78%) say it is the fastest way to find what they need, while just under a third (31%) say they like to use online resources no matter what the problem. Some 14% said using the internet is less embarrassing than talking to a doctor - although just 7% believe that the information they find online is likely to be highly accurate.

However, it's not just the internet fueling the trend for self-diagnosis. Home medical equipment, such as pulse monitors, are also more affordable and widely available, and more than a third (38%) of respondents online agreed that as this technology improves, people will be less inclined to visit a GP in the future.

"The internet has put more information than ever in the hands of patients: not only about symptoms and their possible causes, but also as a tool for locating hospitals, making appointments and interacting with doctors," said Fiona Carter of Health-on-Line.

"However, it's vital to make sure patients still contact trained medical professionals about any health problems they have; self-diagnosis can be unhelpful or even dangerous in some cases."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 2,347 UK adults (aged 18+). Fieldwork was undertaken between 26th - 27th February 2014. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

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