

Shifting Consumer Behaviors in Light of COVID-19 Pandemic— New Data Highlights More Than an Increase in Supplement Usage

By Brian Wommack, Senior Vice President, Communications, CRN

In March 2020, life as we knew it took a dramatic turn as the COVID-19 pandemic rapidly swept through the nation and across the globe. Over the last five months, this public health crisis has forced consumers to adapt to lifestyle changes and to confront difficult decisions concerning their families, occupations, living situations and more often than not, the state of their health. Consumers have changed the way they shop, the way they exercise and overall, the way they maintain health and wellness habits throughout the pandemic.

One of the first hurdles consumers had to adapt to at the start of the pandemic was navigating grocery shopping. What used to be a simple excursion was no longer so simple. For me, having a family of five and two in-laws to shop for, my weekly trip to the store became an operation planned in advance and mapped out with the precision of a military maneuver. I not only shop from a list now, but also know what aisle each item is on—and what substitutes may be made since pantry stocking and supply chain disruptions often frustrated the purchase of my targeted items. I couldn't help but notice that it wasn't just toilet paper, paper towels, surface cleaners and meat products that were constantly out of stock—but also my own industry's wares—dietary supplements. Some stores even took to limiting the number of each supplement product that could be purchased to allow more consumers to obtain these products that suddenly seemed to have even more relevance.

At this point, we have all witnessed the spike in supplement sales through both extensive market data research and personal experience with empty shelves and "out of stocks." Newly released consumer insight data from CRN on COVID-19 builds on and supports the evidence of substantial sales increases the dietary supplement industry is experiencing. According to CRN's COVID-19 survey, 91 percent of those who have shifted their supplement routine during the pandemic reported increasing their regimen in some way.

With the reported increases, it comes as no surprise that supplement users are experiencing store closures, limited hours, stock shortages, limited product availability and other new challenges when buying dietary supplements. Survey results illustrate that these types of obstacles have led to sup-

plement users shopping online, stocking up on products and opting for home delivery.

Data demonstrates a slight increase in online sales when comparing the number of supplement users who report purchasing supplements online during the pandemic (27 percent) versus general online purchasing data from CRN's 2019 survey (24 percent). Further, two in five supplement users are making more dietary supplement purchases through online-only stores since the pandemic began (38 percent). Those most likely to make supplement purchases through online-only stores include male supplement users (45 percent), young adults aged 18-34 (51 percent) and parents of children under the age of 18 (51 percent).

Staying Health-minded

Beyond the changes to consumer shopping habits, the public is also experiencing shifts in other lifestyle behaviors due to social distancing and stay-at-home orders. These shifts affect how consumers value other facets of their personal health and well-being.

Data show that supplement users continue to be very mindful of their health and wellness. According to the COVID-19 survey, 87 percent of supplement users agree the pandemic has made them more conscious of the need to take care of their overall health, compared to 78 percent of non-users. Supplement users also report engaging in more healthy habits compared to non-users in the categories of exercising regularly (40 percent vs. 35 percent); eating a healthy diet (44 percent vs. 35 percent), managing stress (38 percent vs. 35 percent); and staying hydrated (54 percent vs. 51 percent).

This current data further supports what we have learned from past CRN consumer surveys—dietary supplement users are more likely than non-users to practice healthy habits. The 2019 CRN Consumer Survey stated that 71 percent of supplement users reported exercising regularly compared to 53 percent of non-users. Additionally, more supplement users reported in 2019 trying to eat a balanced diet (86 percent vs. 75 percent); visiting their doctor regularly (80 percent vs. 65 percent); getting a good night's sleep (71 percent vs. 61 percent); and maintaining a healthy weight (69 percent vs. 66 percent).

These behavior changes, coupled with

shifting shopping habits further demonstrate how Americans, especially supplement users, are more health conscious in light of the pandemic. Five months in, I may no longer be drawing floor plans to execute the perfect pandemic shopping trip, but I am still seeking solutions to better navigate this health crisis for myself and my family, and confront new challenges as they come along. And I'm not alone. Nearly all consumers are continuing to adjust their lifestyles, fine-tuning behavior and decisions that affect the health and wellness of themselves and their families.



Brian Wommack is the senior vice president, Communications of the Council for Responsible Nutrition (CRN), the leading trade association for the dietary supplement and functional food industry.

Don't miss a single issue...go to NIEmagazine.com/Renew20 to renew your free subscription today!

Visit NIEmagazine.com
Get a FREE Subscription
Digital, Print or BOTH!



- Online Supplier Sourcebook
- Web-exclusive Content
- Digital Edition & Archived Issues
- Industry Events & Resources
- Company Profiles
- Research Reports
- Ingredient Of The Week
- Manage Your Subscription



Sign up for a FREE E-newsletter too!