



Press release

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More and more people take medicines

In 2004 the number of people in the Netherlands taking prescribed or unprescribed medicines increased further. Contraceptive pill use among women continued to decline. People had fewer GP contacts than in 2003, according to recent figures published by Statistics Netherlands.

Self medication increasingly common

In 2004 nearly 40 percent of Dutch men and women took unprescribed medication in a fortnight's period. Twenty years ago this was only 19 percent. The proportion of people taking prescribed medicines rose less strongly, namely from 28 to 37 percent.

Self medication is relatively common among people aged between 15 and 45. When people grow older, the use of prescribed medicines increases sharply: 86 percent of over-75s took prescribed medicines in 2004, as against 20 percent of young people in the age category 15-24.

Use contraceptive pill declining

In the period 1981-1996 the proportion of women aged between 16 and 49 taking the birth control pill, rose from 27 to 46 percent. Subsequently, pill use declined; 40 percent of women took the pill in 2004. Women under compulsory health insurance entirely accounted for the decline after 1996. On the other hand, pill use among privately insured women slightly increased. In 2004, for the first time, pill use among privately insured women was higher than among women participating in the compulsory health insurance scheme.

Fewer people consult their GP

In 2004 73 percent of the Dutch population consulted their GP at least once. Since 2001 the trend is slightly downward. The number of contacts averaged 3.5 in 2004, also below the level of the previous years. The average number of annual GP contacts in 2002 and 2003 was 3.8 and 3.9 respectively. The percentage of the Dutch population who consult a medical specialist, dentist or physiotherapist at least once a year has been stable for years.

Women more often consult their GP

Women more frequently consult their GP than men. In 2004 approximately eight in ten women and seven in ten men consulted their GP at least once. The average number of contacts was also considerably higher for women.