



## **Role of Nurses in Self Medication**

### **Joint statement from the International Council of Nurses and the World Self-Medication Industry**

Self-medication is the treatment of common health problems with medicines especially designed and labelled for use without professional supervision, and approved as safe and effective for such use. These medicines do not require a prescription for purchase and are thus called non-prescription medicines.

Self-medication is a key component of self-care that is particularly significant in an era of increasing chronic illness and well-informed health care consumers. Optimising responsible self-medication is an important and underused resource for health and provides an opportunity for collaboration and consultation among consumers, nurses, pharmacists and physicians.

Nurses play a vital role in health promotion, including aiding clients to develop responsible, informed self-medication and self-care competency. Nurses can recommend treatment of common health problems as well as many recurrent and chronic illnesses. In many parts of the world, nurses are the main providers of primary health care including the use of prescription and non-prescription medicines.

It is important that nurses are knowledgeable about self-care, self-medication and self-medication products, and understand their desired action, common adverse events, interactions with other medicines and the importance of seeking timely referrals. Equally, nurses have a key role in consumer education about responsible self medication including: when to seek advice from health professionals, how to monitor effects, including adverse events; deciding when to stop medicines; use of patient information leaflets, and storage and disposal of unused products.

The self-medication industry, its member associations and companies are key partners in providing information about medicines in a form that is readily useable by the client and the nurse, including information regarding the optimal use of medicines. Moreover, the self-medication industry can provide nurses with sources of additional information, over and above that needed by a consumer.

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