

# Usage of Herbal Supplements and Remedies among Hispanics 45+

Conducted for *AARP Viva su Segunda Juventud*

**March 2010**

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# Usage of Herbal Supplements and Remedies among Hispanics 45+

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Survey conducted by  
GfK Roper Custom Research North America

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## **Purpose and Methodology**

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The purpose of this study was to gather information on older Hispanic adults' usage of and attitudes toward herbal supplements and remedies, and the extent to which these remedies are being passed down from one generation to another. This information was gathered to help inform an upcoming article in the Spring 2010 issue of *AARP Viva su Segunda Juventud*.

This study was conducted via telephone by GfK Roper Custom Research North America, an independent research company. Questions were included on the GfK Hispanic OmniTel survey from October 21 – November 1, 2009. The GfK Hispanic OmniTel survey is a national telephone survey of U.S. households, targeting the U.S. Hispanic population. Interviews were conducted from among a nationally representative sample of 500 Hispanic adults age 45 or older in English and Spanish. The margin of error for total respondents is +/-5%. Throughout the report, when differences are mentioned between subgroups, they are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

## Executive Summary

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- About two-thirds (65%) of Hispanics ages 45 and older believe that herbal remedies and supplements are very or somewhat *effective*. Twelve percent believe supplements are very/somewhat *ineffective*, while another 16 percent say they don't know whether herbal remedies are effective or ineffective.
- When asked how often they use herbal supplements, most Hispanics admit to using them at least occasionally (62%). Over a quarter of respondents (27%) say they use herbal remedies once a week or more, and 16 percent say they use supplements every day. Those respondents who were born in the US and those who are highly acculturated are more likely to say that they *never* use herbal supplements.
- As expected, Hispanics report using herbal remedies for a variety of reasons. Pain relief (18%), stomach ache (17%), and headache (10%) topped the list, with colds (9%) and skin problems (8%) rounding out the top five. Interestingly, 18 percent say that they do not know for which condition they are taking the supplements. Older Hispanics (24%) are more likely to give this answer than their younger counterparts (45-49 year olds and 50-59 year olds both 14%).
- Respondents who say they have used supplements were then asked where they learned about them. Nearly half (47%) say that it is “traditionally part of our culture,” while 40 percent say they learned about herbal remedies from a relative. Reading about herbal remedies in a publication (28%) or learning about them from a friend (27%) are also popular ways of learning about supplements. Only 19 percent say they learned about their herbal remedies from a doctor or health care professional.
- A large majority of Hispanics (70%) say they did not consult a medical professional prior to taking these supplements. Nonetheless, men (39%) are almost twice as likely as women (23%) to say they have consulted a doctor prior to taking supplements. Those with lower incomes and education are less likely to have consulted a health care professional, though it is likely that those respondents are also less likely to have access to health care.
- Slightly over half (55%) say they are passing along their herbal remedies to other relatives. Respondents report sharing these remedies with children (58%) and siblings (56%) the most. A little over one-third (38%) say that they pass along remedies to parents or partners, and 56 percent say they pass along remedies to relatives outside their immediate family. Men (48%) are more likely than women (30%) to say they pass along remedies to a spouse, while adults over age 60 (68%) are more likely than those ages 45-49 (43%) to say they pass along remedies to children.
- Finally, four in ten (40%) Hispanics 45+ say their children use herbal remedies. Those born in Latin American countries are significantly more likely than those born in the US to say their children use supplements (48% vs. 30%).

## Detailed Findings

### *The Efficacy & Use of Herbal Remedies*

Of the 500 Hispanic adults 45+ interviewed, nearly two-thirds (65%) believe herbal remedies or supplements are very or somewhat *effective*. Another 12 percent of Hispanics believe herbal remedies are very or somewhat *ineffective*, while another 16 percent say they don't know whether or not herbal remedies are effective. Those respondents born in Latin America are significantly more likely to say herbal supplements are effective than those born in the US (69% vs. 59%).

**Table 1. Overall, from what you know or have heard, how effective do you find herbal remedies or herbal supplements to be?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=500)	(n=248)	(n=252)	(n=94)	(n=220)	(n=79)	(n=174)	(n=325)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Very/Somewhat effective	65%	69	61	66	65	63	59	69F
Very effective	28%	31	36	29	28	29	25	31
Somewhat effective	37%	38	35	37	38	34	35	38
Neither effective nor ineffective	8%	7	10	13	6	9	11G	6
Somewhat ineffective	6%	5	7	1	8	6	8	3
Very ineffective	6%	5	7	2	6	8	6	6
Don't know	16%	15	17	18	15	15	15	16

Base: Hispanics 45+

There are no significant differences by age, gender or education, but Hispanics with incomes under \$30,000 are more likely to say herbal supplements are effective than those with incomes over \$30,000 (71% vs. 60%). Moreover, Hispanics who are partially acculturated are more likely than those who are highly acculturated to say that herbal remedies are very or somewhat effective (71% vs. 60%).

**Table 1a. Efficacy of Herbal Remedies by Education, Income, and Acculturation**

	Very/Somewhat Effective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Very/Somewhat Ineffective
<b>Income</b>			
Less than \$30,000	71	5	10
\$30,000 or more	60	18	13
<b>Education</b>			
Less than H.S.	63	6	17
H.S. Graduate	67	4	9
Some College or More	65	15	6
<b>Acculturation</b>			
Low	64	3	13
Partly	71	5	9
High	60	14	12

Base: Hispanics 45+

A majority (62%) of respondents admit to using herbal remedies or supplements at least occasionally. Over a quarter (27%) say they use herbal remedies once a week or more, and 16 percent say they use supplements every day. Nearly four in ten (38%) say they *never* use herbal supplements. Hispanics who were born in the US (45%) and those who are highly acculturated (47%) are more likely to say that they never use herbal supplements.

**Table 2. How often do you use any herbal remedies or herbal supplements, that is, something you take orally or apply topically to your skin?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=500)	(n=248)	(n=252)	(n=94)	(n=220)	(n=79)	(n=174)	(n=325)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Ever	62%	63	61	63	66	55	55	67
Once a week or more	27%	33	22	22	33	23	30	25
Daily	16%	18	13	9	17C	17	18	14
At least once a week	12%	15	9	14	16E	6	12	11
A few times a month	14%	9	18A	16	15	12	11	16
A few times a year	21%	21	20	25	19	21	15	26F
Never	38%	37	39	37	34	44	45G	33

Base: Hispanics 45+

Hispanics who say they have used herbal supplements or remedies at least occasionally were then asked where they learned about those remedies. Nearly half of respondents say that it is “traditionally part of our culture” (47%). Four in ten respondents (40%) say that they learned about these remedies from a relative. Information on remedies was also gained from reading newspapers or magazines (28%) or via friends (27%). Very few Hispanics 45+ say they learned about herbal remedies online (11%) or from a doctor (19%).

**Table 3. Where did you learn about these remedies or supplements?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=320)	(n=153)	(n=167)	(n=47)	(n=120)	(n=153)	(n=96)	(n=223)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
It is traditionally part of our culture	47%	44	49	53	42	50	32	57F
A relative	40%	43	37	37	40	40	39	40
Read about it in a newspaper, magazine, or other publication	28%	26	29	24	29	29	34	24
Friend	27%	29	25	37	27	22	27	27
Doctor/health care professional	19%	21	17	25	17	17	21	18
Online	11%	8	13	9	14	9	11	11
Someplace else	16%	18	14	3	18C	20C	18	15

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies  
Multiple responses allowed.

Unsurprisingly, those born in Latin American countries are significantly more likely than those born in the US to say that herbal remedies are traditionally part of their culture (57% vs. 32%). (See Table 3a.) English speakers are more likely than Spanish speakers to say they read about remedies in a publication (38% vs. 23%) or online (20% vs. 8%).



**Table 3a. Source of Information about Herbal Remedies by Education and Acculturation**

	Total	Education			Acculturation		
		<HS	HS Grad	Some College+	Low	Partly	High
	(n=320)	(n=47)	(n=120)	(n=153)	(n=96)	(n=223)	
		A	B	C	D	E	F
It is traditionally part of our culture	47%	57C	48C	33	50F	55F	34
A relative	40%	36	42	43	38	43	37
Read about it in a newspaper, magazine, or other publication	28%	21	31	35A	15	25	40DE
Friend	27%	26	27	30	23	27	30
Doctor/health care professional	19%	17	16	23	12	17	27D
Online	11%	8	7	17	6	11	14
Someplace else	16%	14	23	13	17	13	18

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies  
Multiple responses allowed.

As expected, respondents report using herbal remedies for a variety of reasons (Table 4). Pain relief (18%), stomach ache (17%), and headache (10%) topped the list, with colds (9%) and skin problems (8%) rounding out the top five. Interestingly, 18 percent say that they do not know for which condition they are taking the supplements. Hispanics age 60 and over (24%) are more likely to give this answer than their younger counterparts (45-49 year olds and 50-59 year olds both 14%). Women (21%) are more likely than men (12%) to use herbal remedies for stomach aches, while men are more likely to use these remedies for fatigue (6% men vs. 1% women). Hispanics born in Latin American countries are more likely than those born in the US to say they take herbal supplements for headaches (13% vs. 5%) and stomach aches (23% vs. 7%).

**Table 4. What are your reasons for using these remedies or supplements?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=320)	(n=153)	(n=167)	(n=47)	(n=120)	(n=153)	(n=96)	(n=223)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Pain relief	18	21	15	20	20	14	22	15
Stomach ache	17	12	21A	12	16	18	7	23F
Headache	10	10	10	12	11	6	5	13F
Colds	9	10	8	9	8	11	8	10
Skin problems	8	7	9	0	11C	7	12	5
Sore throat	6	6	5	7	6	4	4	7
Indigestion	6	6	5	5	6	6	9	3
Joint problems/arthritis	5	4	6	0	5	8	5	5
Anxiety	5	6	3	2	7	3	7	3
Problems sleeping	4	2	5	12DE	2	1	6	3
Fatigue	4	6B	1	9E	3	1	7G	2
Boost immune system	3	4	2	5	3	1	3	3
Cancer	2	1	3	0	3	2	4	1
Diabetes/blood sugar	2	3	1	0	1	4	*	3
Menstrual cramps	1	1	2	3	0	1	1	2
Improve memory	1	2	1	0	1	1	2	0
Heart disease	1	1	1	2	0	1	1	1
Bruises	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	1
Depression	*	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Diarrhea	*	1	0	0	0	1	1	*
Fertility	*	*	1	2	0	0	0	1
Any other reason	15	12	18	9	19	14	13	16
DK	18	21	15	14	14	24	18	17

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies  
Multiple responses allowed.

A large majority of Hispanics (70%) say they did not consult a medical professional prior to taking these supplements. Nonetheless, a few subgroup differences emerged. Men are almost twice as likely as women to say they have consulted a doctor prior to taking supplements (39% vs. 23%).

**Table 5. Did you consult a health care professional before using them?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=320)	(n=153)	(n=167)	(n=47)	(n=120)	(n=153)	(n=96)	(n=223)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Yes	30%	39B	23	29	33	27	34	28
No	70%	61	78A	71	67	73	66	72

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies

Moreover, Hispanics who are bilingual (44%) and Hispanics who speak primarily English (37%) are also more likely to have consulted a doctor about herbal supplements than those who speak primarily Spanish (22%). Respondents with lower incomes and education are also less likely to have consulted a health care professional, though these respondents are less likely to have access to health care in general.

**Table 5a. Consulting Medical Professional about Herbal Remedies by Education, Income, Acculturation, and Language Spoken**

	Yes	No
<b>Income</b>		
Less than \$30,000	28	72
\$30,000 or more	42	58
<b>Education</b>		
Less than H.S.	24	77
H.S. Graduate	29	71
Some College or More	40	60
<b>Acculturation</b>		
Low	33	67
Partly	25	75
High	34	66
<b>Language Spoken</b>		
English	37	63
Spanish	22	78
Bilingual	44	56

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies

### *Passing Herbal Remedies on to Others*

Given that nearly half of Hispanics 45+ say that herbal remedies are traditionally part of their culture, it makes sense that they would also be passing these remedies on to others. Indeed, slightly over half of respondents (55%) say that they are passing along their herbal remedies to their relatives. There are no significant differences by age or gender; however, respondents born in the US are more likely than those born in Latin America to say they are passing along their remedies to relatives (62% vs. 50%).

**Table 6. Are you passing along information about your herbal remedies or herbal supplements to your relatives?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=320)	(n=153)	(n=167)	(n=47)	(n=120)	(n=153)	(n=96)	(n=223)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Yes	55%	54	56	63	55	51	62	50
No	45%	45	44	37	45	48	37	50F

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies

Children (58%) and siblings (56%) are the relatives Hispanics 45 and older say they share these remedies with the most. A little over a third say that they pass along remedies to parents or partners (both 38%), and 56 percent say they pass along remedies to other relatives. Men (48%) are more likely than women (30%) to say they pass along remedies to a spouse, while adults over age 60 (68%) are more likely than those ages 45-49 (43%) to say they pass along herbal remedies to children.

**Table 7. With which relatives do you share this information?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=178)	(n=81)	(n=97)	(n=29)	(n=66)	(n=83)	(n=55)	(n=122)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Children	58%	59	57	43	58	68C	54	62
Siblings	56%	57	55	51	58	56	52	59
Parents	38%	33	44	30	49	28	40	38
Spouse/Partner	38%	48B	30	39	46	26	37	40
Other relatives	56%	56	56	62	48	62	63	50

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies and passed along information about supplements to relatives  
Multiple responses allowed.

Finally, when asked if their children use herbal remedies or supplements, 40 percent of Hispanics say their children do. Hispanics born in Latin American countries are significantly more likely than those born in the US to say their children use supplements (48% vs. 30%).

Hispanics ages 50-59 (14%) and those born in the US (15%) are most likely to say that they do not have children.

**Table 8: Do your children use herbal remedies or herbal supplements?**

	Total	Gender		Age			Country of Birth	
		Men	Women	45-49	50-59	60+	US	Latin America
	(n=320)	(n=153)	(n=167)	(n=47)	(n=120)	(n=153)	(n=96)	(n=223)
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Yes	40	39	42	48	37	40	30	48F
No	50	52	49	53	50	51	54	47
No Children	9	9	8	0	14C	7	15G	4

Base: Hispanics 45+ who have ever used herbal remedies

## Appendix A

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### *Annotated Questionnaire*

**1. Overall, from what you know or have heard, how effective do you find herbal remedies or herbal supplements to be?**

(n=500)

Very effective	28 %
Somewhat effective	37 %
Neither effective nor ineffective	8 %
Somewhat ineffective	6 %
Very ineffective	6 %
Don't know	16 %

**2. How often do you use any herbal remedies or herbal supplements, that is, something you take orally or apply topically to your skin?**

(n=500)

Daily	16 %
At least once a week	12 %
A few times a month	14 %
A few times a year	21 %
Never	38 %
Don't know	* %

IF MORE OFTEN THAN NEVER (Q2=1,2,3,4) OR DON'T KNOW (Q2=DK), ASK Q3.  
IF NEVER (Q2=5), SKIP TO NEXT SECTION.

**3. Where did you learn about these remedies or supplements?**

PROGRAMMER: ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES.

PROGRAMMER: RANDOMIZE LIST ITEMS 1-6.

(n=320)

It is traditionally part of our culture	47 %
A relative	40 %
Read about it in a newspaper, magazine, or other publication	28 %
Friend	27 %
Doctor/health care professional	19 %
Online	11 %
Someplace else	16 %
Don't remember	1 %

**4. What are your reasons for using these remedies or supplements?**

PROGRAMMER: ALLOW MULTIPLE RESPONSES.

PROGRAMMER: RANDOMIZE LIST ITEMS 1-21.

(n=320)

Pain relief	18 %
Stomach ache	17 %
Headache	10 %
Colds	9 %
Skin problems	8 %
Sore throat	6 %
Indigestion	6 %
Joint problems/arthritis	5 %
Anxiety	5 %
Problems sleeping	4 %
Fatigue	4 %
Boost immune system	3 %
Cancer	2 %
Diabetes/blood sugar	2 %
Menstrual cramps	1 %
Improve memory	1 %
Heart disease	1 %
Bruises	1 %
Depression	* %
Diarrhea	* %
Fertility	* %
Any other reason? (SPECIFY) _____	15 %
Don't know	18 %
Refused	* %

**5. Did you consult a health care professional before using them?**

(n=320)

Yes	30 %
No	70 %
Refused	0 %

**6. Are you passing along information about your herbal remedies or herbal supplements to your relatives?**

(n=320)

Yes	55 %
No	45 %
Refused	* %

IF PASS ALONG INFO TO RELATIVES (Q6=1), ASK Q7.  
ELSE, SKIP TO Q8.

**7. With which relatives do you share this information?**

(n=178)

Children	58 %
Siblings	56 %
Other relatives	56 %
Parents	38 %
Spouse/Partner	38 %
Refused	0 %

**8. Do your children use herbal remedies or herbal supplements?**

(n=320)

Yes	40 %
No	50 %
No children (vol.)	9 %
Don't know	1 %
Refused	0 %



## Appendix B

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### *Demographics*

<b>Age</b>	
45-49	22%
50-59	47%
60+	31%

<b>Sex</b>	
Male	48%
Female	52%

<b>Marital Status</b>	
Single	13%
Married	60%
Separated, widowed or divorced	27%

<b>Employment Status</b>	
Full-time	34%
Part-time	10%
Not employed	56%
Refused	*

<b>Education</b>	
Less than high school graduate	41%
High school graduate	24%
Some college	14%
Associates/Other college	4%
Graduated college	11%
Post graduate school	4%
Refused	1%

<b>Income</b>	
Under \$30,000	60%
Under \$15,000	26%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	25%
\$25,000 - \$29,999	9%
Over \$30,000	25%
\$30,000 - \$49,999	12%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	5%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	4%
\$100,000+	4%
Refused	5%
Don't know/No response	10%

<b>Number of Children At Home</b>	
No Children	69%
1	14%
2	10%
3 or more	7%

<b>Spanish Spoken at Home?</b>	
Yes	83%
No	17%

<b>Birthplace</b>	
US	46%
Latin America	54%
Mexico	30%
Puerto Rico	5%
Cuba	4%
Dominican Republic	3%
Other Central American Countries	5%
Other South American Countries	7%
Spain	*
Other	*

<b>Number of Years Since Coming to US (among those born in other countries)</b>	
1-5 Years ago	5%
6-10	5%
11-15	7%
16-20	10%
21-25	9%
26-30	18%
31-40	17%
Over 40 years ago	16%
Don't know/No response	3%

<b>Language of Interview</b>	
All Spanish	58%
Mostly Spanish	1%
Mostly English	1%
All English	40%

<b>Acculturation</b>	
Low	26%
Partly	33%
High	40%