



# SELF-CARE

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Reckitt Sustainability Insights 2021



# SELF-CARE

Self-care is becoming an essential part of public health systems – a trend accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Through our brands and partnerships, we're helping to make sure people have access to the information and products they need to protect their health and wellbeing.

Hygiene, health and nutrition are the core of our business. They also lie at the heart of global ambitions for wellness, enshrined in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Yet global megatrends can create barriers to these ambitions by undermining health. Urbanisation increases population density, helping illnesses to spread and increasing the risk to sexual health. An ageing population means more people suffer from chronic conditions. Climate change is increasingly and adversely affecting people's health, directly through higher temperatures and indirectly, for example through increases in water scarcity threatening a resource that's vital for sustaining health. At the same time, higher temperatures can create conditions for bacterial and viral disease to flourish.

## HIGHLIGHTING THE GROWING ROLE OF SELF-CARE

All these circumstances increase the strain on healthcare systems. And, as the burden on them grows, the role of self-care becomes ever more important to safeguarding wellness.

Self-care is defined as 'the ability of individuals, families and communities to promote health, prevent disease, maintain health, and cope with illness and disability with or without the support of a health worker' (World Health Organization, WHO).

The better people and communities can protect, heal and nourish themselves by having access to the right products, and the best information, the better they can support their own health and wellbeing, as well as relieving pressure on healthcare systems.

Governments and businesses like ours have an essential role in this by creating access to products that bolster hygiene, health and nutrition, while also helping people understand the valuable part that these products can play.



## PUTTING SELF-CARE AT THE HEART OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Promoting the importance of self-care and giving people the tools to practise it goes to the heart of our purpose to protect, heal and nurture in the relentless pursuit of a cleaner, healthier world. Through our brands and products, we can help make good hygiene, health and nutrition possible from preventing disease to promoting and maintaining health. For instance, we help people to protect their households and wider community from viruses through our disinfectant products, Dettol and Lysol. We promote sexual wellbeing through Durex, and we supplement children's nutrition through Enfamil.

Through our fight to make access to the highest quality hygiene, wellness and nourishment a right, not a privilege, we strive to make these and other brands more available. Our ambition for 2030 is to reach half the world with brands that enable people to lead cleaner, healthier lives.



Driving this ambition is our aim to ensure that we play our part in preventing disease through a foundation of hygiene and our brands such as Dettol and Harpic, or directly with products such as Durex condoms. At the same time, we're promoting and maintaining health by providing product solutions, services, trustworthy information and health literacy that enable the responsible self-treatment of minor ailments. In 2021, the Association of the European Self-Care Industry (AESGP) reported that anywhere up to a quarter of doctors' consultations for minor ailments could be substituted by self-care solutions, depending on the country. Accurate information is a key element of this and our partnerships with NGOs, governments and healthcare organisations open up information to boost health literacy and help people make informed choices to protect their health and wellbeing.

Our ambition contributes to the goals of public healthcare – both in prevention and treatment. By enabling better hygiene and sanitation, we reduce the risk of waterborne and diarrhoeal disease which is a major cause of illness and death in many countries. By protecting against certain insects, we reduce the risk of transmitting diseases like malaria and dengue fever. By helping to nourish infants, we help to curb infant mortality. And by improving people's understanding of sexual health, we lower the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. COVID-19 has underlined how it's possible to engage people with self-care messages and encourage them to adopt habits that can keep them healthy.

We work with public health providers and communities to make this possible by promoting all aspects of self-care.

For example, with Dettol alone, we've:

- **Reached 20 million children across India to promote hygienic habits.** Our Dettol School Hygiene Education Programme teaches children about self-care, health and hygiene. The goal is to establish healthy hygiene habits from an early age, so children keep themselves safe and healthy, and share these lessons at home, too. The programme has reduced cases of diarrhoea among children by 14.2% since 2014 and reduced school absenteeism by 39%
- **Cut the risk of diarrhoea among new mothers in South Africa.** In 2021, Dettol worked with the Ministry of Health to provide hygiene products and education for new mothers, who, by regularly washing their hands with soap, can reduce the risk of diarrhoea to their babies by up to 47%. By funding healthcare workers, we reached hundreds of thousands of mothers, with the ministry reporting a substantial increase in handwashing
- **Promoted hygiene in thousands of schools in China.** Dettol has partnered with the National Health Commission on a five-year programme providing education about good hygiene through posters, booklets and demonstrations, by investing in schools in underdeveloped areas. So far, 5,500 schools have taken part, and we'll evaluate the programme's impact in 2022

### USING OUR GLOBAL REACH TO BOOST HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Our global reach makes us well placed to enable people to access self-care products and information. Much of this activity happens through our value chain and partnerships with retailers, healthcare professionals and NGOs.

#### Enabling self-care through our value chain

Through our value chain, where we source our ingredients and manufacture our products, we can reach into the communities where we work. We do this through our brand programmes and environmental and human rights work to promote health and wellbeing and support livelihoods.

For instance, in Thailand, where we source raw materials for Durex, we're investing in the health of workers in rural communities, where access to sexual education and services can be limited. We're working with the Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand (PPAT) to deliver guidance on family planning, diseases and preventative measures. Workers also get access to sexual health services through mobile centres and drop-in clinics offering basic tests, treatments and preventative products, and referrals to local hospitals.

#### Promoting self-care

Working alongside healthcare organisations, we can support their activities in reaching both consumers and healthcare professionals with positive messages around self-care.

In 2021, for example, we sponsored webinars on Shaping the Future of Self-care through Pharmacy, hosted by the International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP). The series highlighted to pharmacists the value of self-care, and how they can support it, as well as the role of health literacy, digital technology and self-medication.

In Mexico, we reached more than 100,000 people and 10,000 healthcare professionals with public webinars on Facebook and YouTube on topics including hygiene, sexual health, antimicrobial resistance, the importance of over-the-counter medicines in the health system, mental health, nutrition and digital health. A range of institutions, legislators, healthcare professionals and trade associations, as well as members of the public, were involved in follow-up dialogue on social media, and there was coverage in several newspapers and websites.

### DEVELOPING NEW THINKING

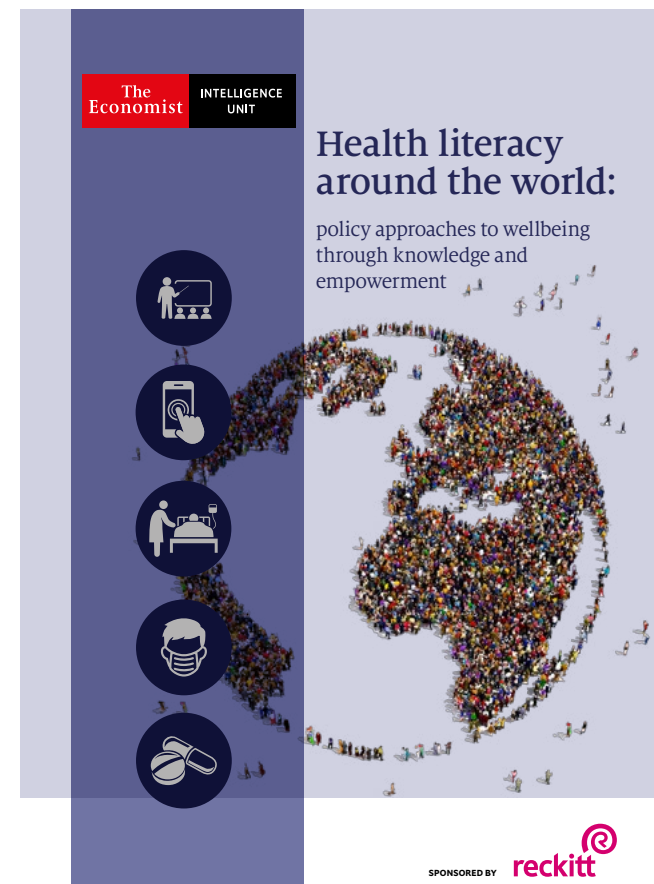
We work with governments, NGOs and academia to develop and promote new thinking and ideas on topics like sanitation and sexual health.

At the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 in 2021, we launched our research paper showing the link between the health of the planet and the health of its people. By focusing on evidence of climate change's impact on health and hygiene, we used our role as a Principal Partner to draw attention to the need for a stronger connection between public health strategy and climate impacts.

In July 2021, through our membership of the Malaysian Pharmaceutical Association (PhAMA), we launched a white paper on how self-care can be a cornerstone of healthcare in Malaysia. The paper outlined the challenges of the next two decades, including an ageing population and a rise in non-communicable diseases, and possible ways to tackle them. Strategies such as personal wellness and hygiene, as well as wider access to, and responsible use of, self-medication were among the paper's solutions, which would help to empower patients at the same time as reducing the burden on healthcare systems. At the paper's launch there was support from the government for the value of promoting self-care, as well as initiatives like direct engagement with communities and patient groups, and platforms for healthcare providers to promote and enable self-care.

We also engage in advocacy and develop thought leadership, persuading policy makers and opinion formers to enable self-care as part of public health frameworks. Since 2016, we have published a series of papers through the Economist Intelligence Unit aimed at policy makers, governments and regulators. We and our partners use them to generate evidence-based conversations on how to drive forward key aspects of self-care. The 2021 paper 'Health Literacy around the World' was launched in July on International Self-Care day. It examines the current state of play on health literacy around the world and showcases examples of best practice.

In Italy, we've advocated successfully for the government to endorse the importance of sexual health literacy, paving the way



for a national sexual health education programme. Our data showed that half of young people in Italy start having sex between 11 and 13, while more than 50% don't use condoms and have never spoken to their families about sex education, preferring to look online for information. In 2021, members of parliament used these figures in a proposal to mandate sex education in schools.

### MAKING REGULATION WORK BETTER FOR CONSUMERS

We work with governments to make sure regulations in each market inspire confidence in the safety and efficacy of healthcare products while also making them as easy to access as possible. This can include working with authorities to simplify regulation so that products can come to market sooner while still being stringently tested, or switch from being prescription-only to being available over the counter (OTC). The goal in all cases is to see that regulation works as well as possible for people, both by protecting them and helping them to get the right medicines to support self-care.

Highlights in 2021 included:

- **Making over the counter medicines available faster.**

In Brazil, working with an industry trade association, we've streamlined registration for products in well-established categories, so medicines with a full dossier of clinical data are now registered under a notification process instead of waiting up to three years for approval. In the Philippines, we collaborated with relevant industry associations and the national Food and Drug Administration on a new e-commerce regulation for pharmacies which will come into effect in 2022. This will widen access to medicines to reduce the impact of minor illness on healthcare systems

- **Making it easier to buy the right products in the US.**

Here, we're working to change product naming guidelines for OTC medicines to make labels as easy as possible for people to understand, so they choose the right medicines. This is particularly important in the US, where people are more likely to buy medicines without advice from healthcare professionals. Currently, draft guidelines for naming OTC products are modelled on those for prescription medicines, even though consumers obtain them in completely different ways. We're working through the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) to encourage the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to overhaul the guidelines

## FUNDING STUDIES ON GLOBAL HYGIENE CHALLENGES

In July 2020, we started the Reckitt Global Hygiene Institute (RGHI), a not-for-profit organisation in the US with a vision for a world where sustainable hygiene practices are universally adopted to improve global health, pandemic resilience and community wellbeing. RGHI's post-doctoral fellowship programme produces scientific papers encouraging scientists to drive improvements in global hygiene.

RGHI also funds educational and charitable institutions for original scientific research at some of the world's leading universities. In 2021, RGHI launched its first call for fellowship

applications and received an enormous response, with enquiries from 15 countries spanning almost every continent. It's now made four grants for research focusing on some of the world's biggest hygiene challenges.

For example, the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine has received funding to assess treatments that prevent trachoma, the most common infectious cause of blindness. The study will look at the impact of different face cleansing protocols for two- to five-year-old children in Ethiopia, with the potential to drastically change the lives of those at risk of blindness.

CASE STUDY

### LISTENING TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS

Reporting effectively across our many sustainability issues and giving regular updates on our programmes and activities is always a work in progress. So we appreciate your feedback. What should we keep doing? And where can we do better?

Email us at [sustainability@reckitt.com](mailto:sustainability@reckitt.com)

Or write to:

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