



Upsurges in Vitamins, Minerals & Supplements

The Vitamins, Minerals and Supplements (VMS) has always been an important category in pharmacy in Ireland. There has been an upsurge in the past few years as people have become more aware of nutrition and what they can take to help aid their bodies to operate to their full capacity. People have begun to learn and understand that VMS are important at any stage of life from birth right up to the elderly.



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Over the past year with the incidence of the Covid-19 pandemic there has been a significant increase in the incidence and demand for the VMS category when compared to previous years. Initially with the outbreak of the pandemic, there was a surge in demand for Vitamin C and Zinc and other products that could aid and strengthen the immune system to help fight off any possible infection. As the year progressed and more information and research about the Coronavirus emerged, there was a significant increase in the requests for Vitamin D.

Multivitamins Boost

Since then, there has been lots of engagement with the public who are eager to know more about the role of not only Vitamin D but also general multivitamins in helping keep the body functioning at its full potential to help as much as possible with the constant threat of the virus.

In addition to this, there was an upsurge in demand in requests for joint care supplements, particularly in the elderly population. With an increase in advertising for such supplements and the mention of turmeric and its anti-inflammatory properties, sales for these items increased as well.

The biggest challenges for pharmacy teams were keeping up to date with the ever-changing health advice that was constantly changing on an almost weekly basis. There was always some new article or study that came out and it was important to decipher how accurate and reliable these sources were.

At the very least, the taking of a good multivitamin was greatly encouraged and welcomed by customers for all ages and members of the family. Another big challenge was keeping up with the supply demand, initially at the very start of the pandemic, Vitamin C and Zinc supplements began to go on short supply from the wholesalers as manufacturers were overwhelmed by the demand. However, this issue has been resolved but pharmacy teams had not encountered the likes of this ever before.

Link Sales Opportunities

The biggest opportunities have been link sales for example if an antibiotic was prescribed then there was an opportunity for discussion for probiotics and their role in protecting gut flora or if the person was interested in a multivitamin or tonic to help build them back up.

People were willing to talk and engage with staff members with regards to VMS and how the role they can play in helping to support normal bodily functions and to prevent the incidence of certain conditions for example Lysine for those susceptible to cold sores.

The value of the VMS category for our pharmacy has increased significantly since 2020, we

are constantly seeking more information on new products to ensure that the category in the pharmacy is ever evolving and constantly up to date to offer the best range of choice for customers. We would also make sure to have a wide range to product types from oral liquids, tablets, drops, sprays and effervescent tablets as we discovered that customer preference is important to consider to aid compliance and sustained usage for maximum benefit for the customer. The more informed a person is through discussion with a pharmacy staff member and the more opportunity they have to ask questions and gather as much information as possible, the more confident they were at selecting a product most beneficial to them and their needs.

Merchandising Tips

The most important thing we take into consideration when merchandising this area in the pharmacy to achieve optimum footfall would be to rotate our displays to reflect the current situation. For example, all the Vitamin D products are always at eye level and then when schools began to reopen, all the multi vitamin and mineral products were

made more visible. Special offers were highlighted in store, e.g. if an item was at a special price or included a free item with purchase these were very eye catching for consumers.

I would recommend to my pharmacy team to be aware of any changes in the current climate and health advice and to know all the relevant information on the products that were being recommended and advertised. For example, we made sure all our knowledge on Vitamin D was up to date and what doses and what formulations were available so we could accurately make personal recommendations to customers.

Our training of pharmacy staff would generally consist of going through the shelves with staff members and asking questions to ensure their knowledge is accurate and up to date. This role play between staff has been quite beneficial. We also encourage each other that if we see a product being advertised or have seen health advice published to make us all aware and I would generally do the research and print off all the information so we can all learn about the products to ensure the knowledge we provide is of an extremely high standard.

