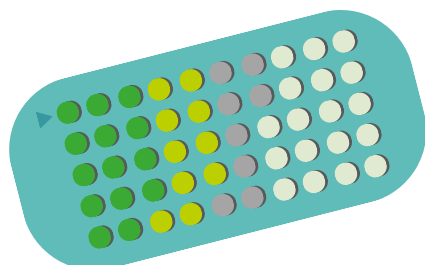


Half of Belgians used medication in the past 24 hours

What medicines are used on an average day



- Cardiovascular disease (28.9%)
- Nervous system (20.1%)
- Digestive system and metabolism (16.8%)
- Other (34.2%)

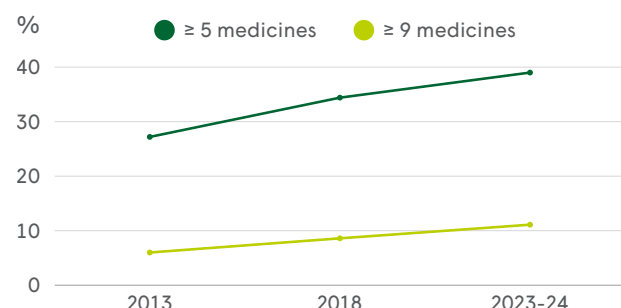
The three most frequently used non-prescribed conventional medicines are **paracetamol alone** (35.2% of total), **ibuprofen** (10.3%) and **paracetamol combination preparations** (8.1%).

The percentage of users (in the past 24 hours) of **opioid painkillers** remained stable (**2.5%**) in 2023-24, despite government efforts to reduce the use of these medicines.

Compared to those with a higher education diploma, **those with the lowest education levels use opioids 3.7 times more often**. In contrast, they use non-prescribed medications 1.5 times less often.

Use of at least 5 medicines per day has increased significantly among people aged 65 and over

Number of people aged 65 and over who used at least 5 or 9 medicines in the past 24 hours



Over the past decade, the **percentage of people aged 65 and over using at least 5 medicines per day has increased significantly**: from **27.4% in 2013** to **38.4% in 2023-24**; the percentages of users of at least 9 medicines per day for these years are 5.6% and 10.9%, respectively.

However, the **percentage of people aged 65 and over with multiple chronic illnesses has not increased**. This could indicate an increasing medicalization of the approach to chronic illnesses and conditions.

Benzodiazepine use among the elderly is declining, but remains high

The **percentage of people aged 65 and over who used a benzodiazepine** in the past 24 hours decreased from **15.9% in 2013** to **10.9% in 2023-24**. However, the use of long-lasting benzodiazepines continued to fluctuate around 3% during this period.

Compared to other OECD countries, **chronic benzodiazepine use among people aged 75 and over in Belgium (103 per 1000) remains very high**. The OECD average in 2021 was 28 per 1000.

Among people aged 65 and over, **the use of benzodiazepines is 1.8 times higher among the least educated**.

