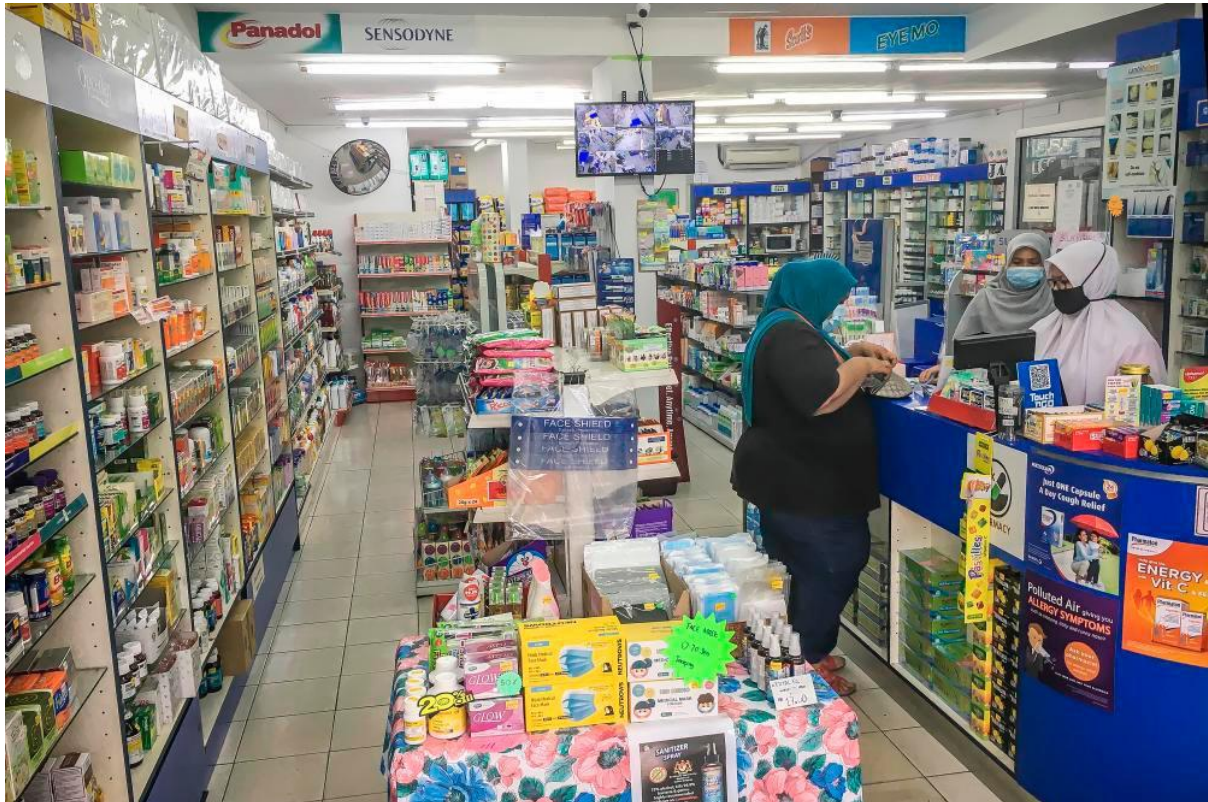


# Health risks of self-medicating

Raveen Aingaran

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**PETALING JAYA:** The public has been warned against self-medicating when ill as they could face more health problems in doing so, said Malaysian Medical Association president Dr Azizan Abdul Aziz.

She added that many individuals have opted to research their health complaints, self-diagnose and self-prescribe treatment with the advent of the internet and e-commerce platforms offering a wide range of medicines.

“This should not come as a surprise. Medicines sold online is a serious concern. There is no proper regulation and enforcement to monitor the industry.”

Azizan said it is vital for pharmacists to request a doctor’s prescription before dispensing medications.

“Prescribing medications without proper medical consultations could lead to serious, and sometimes fatal, outcomes due to potential drug interactions or existing health conditions.

"Transparency on medical history, current medications and allergies are essential for health safety."

She also said it is more likely for individuals to self-medicate if they have a mild flu, sore throat, cough, headache or a stomach upset.

"Of particular concern are the many men who choose to self-medicate for erectile dysfunction, or individuals with persistent headaches, as these could be symptoms of an underlying condition or the result of taking certain medications."

Azizan said all prescription drugs should be stringently regulated, including regular audits on repeat online prescriptions, due to the health risks of self-medication and the potential for abuse.

"The Health Ministry must tackle growing incidents of online advertising and sale of drugs, especially as more Malaysians shift to digital platforms for their purchases."

She said some individuals have a dangerous perception that medical consultations were unnecessary for common ailments.

"Although many flu medications and cough mixtures can be obtained over the counter, it is essential to consult a doctor to ensure the right treatment for a specific complaint.

"It is always best to prioritise personalised medical advice over self-diagnosis," Azizan said, adding that different ailments could have similar symptoms.

A 23-year-old, who asked to be known only as Shika, said she usually buys painkillers for her menstrual cramps and regular stomach aches.

"I decided not to see a doctor because my cramps are infrequent and don't seem to be a sign of a more serious underlying condition.

"Although I self-medicate for minor issues every once in a while, I would still prefer going to the doctor because they can offer expert medical advice and ensure my health is properly assessed and treated, which self-medication cannot guarantee."