



HEALTH AND WELLNESS SHOPPERS SEEK RETAILERS WHERE VALUE, SPECIALTY, AND EXPERIENCE REIGN

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Health and wellness shoppers favor retailers defined by value, specialization, and experience.

2026 Thought Leadership Series

Shoppers are altering their purchasing behaviors for health and wellness products primarily to find better value, access specialized items, and enjoy a more enjoyable shopping experience. While online retailers such as Amazon and Walmart continue to grow rapidly, traditional brick-and-mortar stores are also evolving, as consumers increasingly favor supermarkets and mass-market retailers over drugstores for lower prices and a more seamless shopping experience.

Industry experts have extensively examined their perspectives on the changing trends in health and wellness purchasing. Many observe that the trend is shifting—and continues to shift—toward stores where the health and wellness experience is a key differentiator.

In this article, we aim to explain why consumers are changing their purchasing habits for health and wellness products, including prescriptions, supplements, food, and personal care items, and partnered with Pogo (joinpogo.ai) to collect insights from 3 million purchase-verified consumers through their AI-moderated video interviewing platform. Findings were integrated with shopper data from our nationwide consumer panel.

Four Core Drivers of the Shift:

Rising inflation caused over 70% of consumers to change shopping habits, favoring lower prices, deals/promotions, or private-label brands. Drugstore promotions dropped by more than 35% over two years, pushing budget shoppers toward mass retailers like Walmart for their health and wellness needs.

Online health and wellness platforms are expanding, offering specialized products such as superfoods and supplements that are often not available in physical stores. Approximately one-third of online health consumers avoid in-store shopping due to limited stock and concerns about theft stemming from restricted access to merchandise.

Over 50% of shoppers are “reimagining” their health and wellness shopping, favoring digital and supermarket pharmacies over traditional pharmacies. Shoppers cited that supermarkets are now surpassing traditional drugstores in terms of trust and staffing.

Modern consumers, especially Gen Z and Millennials, are skeptical of generic health claims and favor brands that emphasize evidence-based personalization, such as AI-based supplement recommendations, while demanding transparency about ingredients. Their health spending is shifting to online channels, which now surpass mass-market retailers, though physical stores still account for 75%+ of U.S. wellness spending. Digital platforms are rapidly growing, mainly at the expense of traditional drugstores.



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Key Shopping Trends

About 38% of consumers buy health and wellness products via social channels, driven by influencer recommendations. Brands are adopting DTC strategies, offering personalized vitamin and nutrition subscriptions, bypassing third-party retailers.

There is a shift toward at-home health management, with more people using diagnostics, sleep monitors, and home fitness equipment to gain greater control over their wellness routines. The popularity of weight-loss medications like Ozempic has increased demand for supporting products, including fresh foods and high-protein snacks, at both mass retailers and specialty stores.

Shoppers are increasingly changing how and where they purchase health and wellness products, driven by the need for convenience, affordability, and personalized experiences.

Generational Differences in Shopping Behavior

Gen Z & Millennials: These young, digitally savvy consumers account for over 40% of market spending and are twice as likely to choose natural or alternative products, relying heavily on social media for discovery.

Boomers & Gen X: Older generations, with their established, recurring habits, are increasingly focused on preventive care, particularly those targeting heart and joint health.

Top Retail Destinations

Online merchants now lead the health and wellness trend landscape, capturing the largest market share. Amazon plays a central role, rapidly expanding into niche categories such as superfoods, energy chews, and OTC treatment protocols.

Mass retailers and superstores like Walmart and Target continue to serve as dominant "one-stop" destinations. Walmart has experienced a significant increase in eCommerce sales for healthier grocery options, while Target remains popular among younger, intentional shoppers.

Grocery stores catering to health-conscious consumers include premium natural grocers like The Fresh Market, Sprouts Farmers Market, and Whole Foods Market. These "supernaturals" grew significantly, securing nearly 30% of the natural market share.

Specialty health stores like The Vitamin Shoppe and GNC are thriving by focusing on functional nutrition, offering products such as ready-to-drink (RTD) protein beverages and longevity supplements.

Drugstores, though still vital for pharmacy services, have seen market share decline, primarily to both physical and online competitors. Chain Drug Stores face competitive challenges due to price differences, in-store stock shortages, and inadequate service models.



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From Brick-and-Mortar to Click-and-Order

The most significant change is the shift in spending from traditional brick-and-mortar stores to online platforms.

Drugstores, once the main providers of healthcare, are losing market share to online rivals. Over 20% of consumers cite poor stock and uncomfortable shopping environments, like items being locked up, as reasons for choosing online alternatives. Price disparity has grown as drugstore promotions have declined in the past two years, making them less competitive.

Amazon, the leading online retailer, continues to capture a large share of market growth. In 2025, Amazon's health segment expanded considerably, offering a variety of products from energy chews to superfoods.

Grocery stores are shifting their branding strategies to present themselves as "wellness partners" rather than simply food retailers to remain relevant. At present, over 40% of health-conscious shoppers favor Walmart for their overall health and wellness needs.

In conclusion:

How do you stay relevant in health and wellness retail by 2026? Selling a brand promise isn't enough anymore. You'll need to show proof. Moving away from polished, aspirational lifestyle messaging toward outcomes backed by evidence is how you'll build real trust.

Consumers are looking for clarity, not hype. They want simple claims, clear ingredient lists, and results they can see in their own lives. This also means moving from just fixing problems after they happen to helping people stay ahead of them.

Consider how your brand fits into a daily routine so that staying healthy feels natural. Instead of just selling a single product, offer a program that includes the product, guidance, and check-ins. It's about making healthy choices feel like the easiest ones.