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# Probiotics And Menopause Support Driving UK Dietary Supplements Market Growth

by [David Ridley](#)

Kantar data shows a slow but steady expansion of the UK vitamins, minerals and supplements market driven largely by digestive health products, especially probiotics, and women's health products, in particular those supporting women experiencing the menopause.

Double-digit growth by sales value of probiotics and women's health supplements for menopause is driving a slow but steady expansion of the UK's vitamins, minerals and supplements market, according to the latest data from market intelligence firm Kantar.

While VMS growth is slower than the healthcare category in general, which grew by sales value at an impressive rate of 10% in the 52 weeks to 3 September 2023, Kantar's latest data indicates that UK consumers are still willing to invest in wellness, even when their finances are under pressure.

Despite cost-of-living pressures on consumers, sales in the UK's VMS mass market – i.e. supermarkets and large pharmacy chains – were up 5% by value and 1% by volume during the 12-month period, Kantar's Matt Maxwell told HBW Insight in an exclusive interview.

“You might expect that given there's a cost-of-living crisis, shoppers might deprioritize their health in order to save money, especially as a quarter of the UK population claim to be struggling financially,” commented Maxwell, who is strategic insight director at Kantar. “Whilst this might be the case in some categories such as foods in general, where we see a shift towards frozen foods in tougher times, for example, over the past year the VMS market appears to be weathering the storm relatively well.”

Admittedly, Maxwell conceded, VMS growth is much slower than the healthcare market in general, which is characterized by reactive general sales list OTC products like analgesics and indigestion remedies.

“There's still growth in the VMS category, but not as strong as in the healthcare category. If you're suffering from something, you are much more likely to still go and buy regardless of the price.”

However, it is a good sign that consumers are not abandoning preventative health even in hard times, Maxwell noted, especially given that VMS products tend to be more than double the price of healthcare products.

“During COVID we saw a huge increase in people's awareness of the role of VMS products in looking after their immunity and protecting wellness,” Maxwell explained. “This has essentially continued post-COVID as well.”

While there has been some drop off in sales compared to peak COVID-19, growth has continued, indicating that the shopping habits formed during that time have endured. “If you look at the five year trends, it's really positive,” Maxwell added.

## **Probiotic Trend**

Within the VMS category, digestive health, in particular probiotic supplements, has been performing “exceptionally well,” Maxwell noted. Digestive Health supplement sales increased by 52% by value and 32% by volume in the 52 weeks.

On average, shoppers spent £21 (\$25) on digestive health supplements, up £5 on the previous year and representing the highest spend-increase of all VMS sub-categories.

New products like probiotics are driving this impressive growth, Maxwell explained.

“The rise of probiotics and understanding of the importance of maintaining a healthy biome, in addition to the fact consumers are more aware of food intolerances than ever before, has clearly helped this category go from strength to strength,” he commented.

Given the restrictions on advertising the health benefits of probiotics, with the UK Advertising Standards Authority recently suggesting that term “probiotic” would be considered a health claim that may be allowed with appropriate evidence, consumers seem to be finding out about these products via personal recommendations and research online.

“It's word of mouth that's really driving a lot of growth at the moment,” Maxwell reported. “We're also seeing more and more consumers researching probiotics and just generally being a bit more curious about their health.”

“With retailers such as Holland and Barrett focusing on digestive health and gut health foods like kefir becoming more popular we can expect more consumers to be converted to the category over

the next few years.”

## **Menopause Support**

Another category gaining market share in the VMS market is women’s health. Sales of supplements supporting women through the menopause increased 14% by value and 6% by volume in the 52 weeks.

“One of the big things that we’ve seen over the last couple of years is manufacturers trying to break the menopause taboo and make people aware that it’s a perfectly normal thing to experience,” Maxwell commented. “Having companies like Procter & Gamble supporting women throughout this life stage with new launches has helped raise awareness and engagement.”

One women’s health sub-category that hasn’t fared so well during the year is pregnancy and conception. During the pandemic, sales of supplements for pregnancy and conception more than doubled. However, as things have gone back to normal, demand has fallen back sharply, Maxwell noted.

“This is a category that did exceptionally well during the pandemic,” he said. “As you might imagine, with a lot of people at home, we had a bit of a baby boom during that time. And so we saw huge growth of pregnancy and contraception supplement sales.”

“Since then, we’ve actually seen sales in the category drop back to pre-pandemic levels. We’re not necessarily at home as much and thinking about having kids. So, actually, in the last year, pregnancy and contraception sales have declined.”