

Pruhealth Vitality Index Reveals Britain's Health Perception Gap

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The new PruHealth Vitality Index has revealed a clear gap between Britons' perceptions of what it means to be healthy and having a real understanding of the impact of lifestyle, diet and fitness levels on current and future health. The Index - which will be repeated on a biannual basis to track the nation's health trends - provides a comprehensive analysis of general health and wellbeing in Britain.

The report reveals that 69%* of people in Britain claim they are in a good state of health. However, when lifestyle and fitness choices

(http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/health_answers/clinical/Lifestyle/NutritionandFitness/exercise_top_10) are scrutinised the reality paints quite a different picture as a significant proportion of those who feel they are in a good state of health do not follow a healthy lifestyle:

- only 58% feel they actually follow a healthy lifestyle
- 47% describe their fitness levels as 'good'
- 24% eat their recommended five a day of fruit and veg
- two thirds think they are overweight
- 21% of Britons smoke
- only a fifth of Britons don't feel under any stress
- only 14% go for regular screenings or check ups with their GP

Dr David Grainger, Senior Fellow, Cambridge University, said: "This report makes clear that people listen to and understand the public health message. Lifestyles are improving and disease rates are falling. But there is plenty more to do."

He continued, "If half of current smokers managed to stop smoking (http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/health_answers/clinical/Lifestyle/Education/quit_smoking) tomorrow, we estimate that nearly a million years of lost life would be saved from heart disease alone. Regular health checkups are particularly useful, and it is disappointing to see that only 14% of respondents had regular health checks, despite the emphasis of the public health message on prevention rather than cure."

Dr Grainger believes, "The Vitality Index (http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/insurance/about_pruhealth/press_center?press=consumers_expert_more_from_pmi_nov08) is a valuable new indicator of attitudes and behaviours that promote a healthy lifestyle. The Index balances the importance of a number of different areas to provide an interesting snapshot of lifestyles across the UK, and has the potential to predict future trends in public health. This focus on balance, rather than over-emphasis of the importance of one particular element of a healthy lifestyle, conveys exactly the right message at a time when we are in danger of being overwhelmed with guidance on staying fit and healthy."

The majority (81%) of Britons say they know what they should be doing in order to follow a healthy lifestyle, but many simply aren't putting this into action, with lack of motivation, cost and lack of time clear barriers to living a healthy lifestyle

(http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/insurance/vitality/reduce_premiums). More than half (53%) of respondents feel free access to exercise and swimming classes would help tackle national obesity, and 49% claim cheaper fruit and vegetables would have an effect.

-Ends-

Notes to Editors:

*The research was carried out on behalf of PruHealth by Ipsos MORI. A nationally representative sample of 3,034 GB adults were questioned online in July 2008. Results are weighted to be representative of the GB adult population.

About PruHealth (<http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/>):

PruHealth was launched in October 2004 as a joint venture between Prudential and Discovery Holdings from South Africa. Since launch, PruHealth has grown quickly. It now covers approximately 190,000 lives and in a sample of its individual customers, one third said they had changed their behaviour for the better because of its Vitality reward scheme which encourages policyholders to look after their health.

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