

# PruHealth report Brits could be waiting too long to do something about their health

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PruHealth's bi-annual Vitality Index\* - which tracks the nation's health trends across stress, exercise, diet, smoking, health knowledge and check-ups – has shown that it would take being diagnosed with a health condition to encourage the 79% of people in the UK to improve their health and fitness.

The Vitality Index (<http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/insurance/vitality/status>) also shows a distinction between what UK adults consider the biggest health concerns facing the nation and their own individual health concerns. For example, while obesity was considered the biggest health issue facing the nation, from an individual standpoint, cancer was the greatest health concern nationally. Inability to stop smoking ([http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/health\\_answers/clinical/Lifestyle/Education/quit\\_smoking](http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/health_answers/clinical/Lifestyle/Education/quit_smoking)) and alcohol abuse made it into the top 5 biggest health issues facing the nation; however these concerns were replaced by stress and Alzheimer's disease on the list of individual health concerns. Conversely, poor diet and nutrition was considered one of the biggest health concerns facing the nation by almost one fifth of UK adults (19 per cent), but only 8 per cent saw it as an individual health concern.

Although people in the UK appear to be clear on the big issues that are facing the health of the nation (with 81 per cent of people knowing what they should and should not do to be healthy), when it comes to translating this knowledge into healthy behaviours, people appear to be struggling. Only a fifth exercise the recommended 5 days a week or more, and just under a quarter eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day.

Shaun Matisonn, CEO at PruHealth (<http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/>), said: "The most concerning figure here is undoubtedly the 79 per cent of people who will wait until they are diagnosed with an illness before making any attempt to improve their health and fitness, rather than making a lifestyle change now in order to prevent being diagnosed with an illness in the future.

"Finding a way to motivate a change in lifestyle is the biggest hurdle we face as a society, but using incentives to encourage people to look after their health and wellbeing is an extremely powerful motivator."

Commenting on the findings, Dr David Grainger, Senior Fellow, Cambridge University, said: "Even though three-quarters of people see the health of themselves and their loved ones as a key priority, for the majority it would take diagnosis of ill health to motivate any significant change of lifestyle. It is hard to over-estimate how big a hurdle this is to promoting change. It is disappointing to see that only 13 per cent of respondents had regular health checks, despite the emphasis of the public health message on prevention rather than cure.

"Interestingly, though, more than half of the population say they would change their lifestyle in response to rewards and incentives. Giving serious thought to incentives for a healthy lifestyle ([http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/health\\_answers/clinical/Lifestyle/NutritionandFitness/ibs](http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/health_answers/clinical/Lifestyle/NutritionandFitness/ibs)) must therefore move higher up the public health agenda."

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#### Notes to Editors

\*The research was carried out on behalf of PruHealth, the insurer that rewards policyholders for engaging in healthy behaviour, by Ipsos MORI. A nationally representative sample of 3,034 GB adults were questioned online in January 2009. Results are weighted to be representative of the GB adult population. Seasonal variations may affect some responses.

#### About PruHealth

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 over 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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