

38% of SA parents say their children can't differentiate between healthy and unhealthy foods

The State of Nutrition in South Africa 2021 report highlights improvements and challenges to our national health and wellbeing in the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a strong focus on how the foods youth eat affect their health, development and functioning throughout every life stage.

Johannesburg, 07 September 2021: It is not lost on us that 2020 and 2021 have been some of the most challenging years in our young democracy, especially when it comes to food security which is vital to maintain a strong and healthy nation. The past 18 months have highlighted just how important our mental, emotional and physical wellbeing are against the backdrop of a global pandemic.

The annual [State of Nutrition in South Africa 2021 report](#), commissioned by Tiger Brands' Eat Well Live Well Institute, delved into better understanding South Africans with regards to their dietary choices, eating behaviours and lifestyles. It assessed eating and snacking patterns, exercise routines, and how these are guided by food nutrition labels, nutrition knowledge gaps and food security, among other factors.

As part of its mandate as a Tiger Brands nutrition initiative and education platform, the Eat Well Live Well Institute and [Eat Well Live Well](#) proposition aims to make good health and wellness easier and more accessible by empowering consumers with knowledge, so that a balanced lifestyle becomes an internalised part of their daily lives.

The second iteration of the report is perhaps even more crucial than the first, as Covid-19 and the July riots continue to widen the inequality gap – the impacts of which will be felt for years to come. Since the start of the pandemic, 30% of South Africans strongly agree that cost drives the purchase of food, despite the health benefits. This needs to be addressed urgently, particularly as last year's report results showed that South Africans are obese with a median BMI of 35.1, which may lead to lifestyle diseases.

The interactive report offers easy-to-understand nutrition information, debunks common nutrition myths with insights from registered dieticians, and offers wholesome, affordable recipes using EWLW-endorsed products that are low in sugar. It's like having a personal dietician close at hand to guide you through your wellness journey.

Do our children know what's good for them?

Our findings show that two out of five (38%) South African parents believe their children do not have a good understanding of the difference between healthy and unhealthy foods, despite the fact that parents themselves – followed closely by family, friends, and school teachers – believe to have the most influence on children's views on food. Almost a third (32%) of parents, however, indicated that their children significantly influence the purchase of healthy food. This is double the number of respondents who indicated that their child has a significant influence on purchasing unhealthy food (16%).

Making healthy choices is often confusing, expensive and time consuming, especially if you're a time-strapped parent trying to make ends meet. That is why this year's State of Nutrition in South Africa 2021 report includes an extensive section on children, which aims to help inform their understanding of nutrition, health and wellness. It guides parents with practical advice and easy-to-follow tips and affordable recipes to help keep their children healthy. The report also highlights the importance of an active lifestyle on their creativity, problem-solving abilities and overall development, while providing a guide to age-appropriate exercises and fun activities.

"Understanding what constitutes balanced nutrition and a healthy lifestyle is of utmost importance to our youth, particularly when food security is front and centre," says Becky Opdyke, Chief Marketing Officer at Tiger Brands. "We are acutely aware that adequate nutritional nourishment from a young age, coupled with an active lifestyle, has the potential to positively impact our society and its future economic outcomes," she continues.

41% of South Africans don't drink enough water

Forty-one per cent of South Africans don't drink the recommended eight glasses of water a day, our research report found. With 28% of those respondents claiming that they don't have time to do so, 19% not liking the taste, and 9% not having access to clean and safe drinking water – something that needs to be addressed urgently.

The domino effect of healthy living can be seen across the board, particularly among those consumers who make small conscious steps to be healthier, such as drinking sufficient amounts of water and prioritising movement into their daily or weekly routine. Our findings illustrate that those who drink sufficient amounts of water, also tend to lead much healthier and more balanced lifestyles overall – they are more likely to avoid eating sugar and also more likely to read food nutrition labels.

Are we getting healthier since the start of the pandemic?

What is encouraging, at least, is that there has been an improvement in consumer nutrition, health behaviour and key health metrics among the average South African since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (when initially measured in August 2020) versus May 2021.

"Despite the devastating impacts of the pandemic on how we live, work, play and eat, it has also given many of us the time and motivation to try strive for more balanced lifestyles that prioritise our overall wellness. The pandemic is also teaching us how to be easier with ourselves and more supportive of each other in the face of multiple challenges," says Opdyke in closing.

Other key findings:

57.5% of South Africans eat too much salt – more than the World Health Organisation's recommendation of 5g (one teaspoon) daily.

32% of South Africans claim to try to avoid sugar.

66% of South Africans do not exercise enough (150 minutes/weekly).

Download the annual State of Nutrition in South Africa 2021 report [here](#).

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