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ASIA EDITION

Philips' Healthy Living in Asia survey reveals gap between health monitoring and action

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A recent study found that more than 41% of Singaporeans seldom or never use health data that they collect based on personal health monitoring



Royal Philips, a global leader in health technology, has released the second set of findings from its Healthy Living in Asia survey.

The survey of 4,000 people in Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand, conducted with research agency Kantar Profiles Network, reveals a gap between health monitoring and action in the region: while people are using personal health technology to track their health more than they did before the pandemic, many are not yet actively taking corrective action based on the health data collected. With personal health technologies will play an even bigger role in self-care in Asia, it will be key to empower consumers to use and understand them better to improve preventive health in 2023 and beyond.

The survey found that the pandemic has driven interest in preventive health with nearly a third (30%) of respondents in the region now using personal health devices more than they did before the pandemic. In Singapore, heart health (40%), oral health (26%), sleep (34%), and nutrition (37%) are amongst the conditions that people are now monitoring at least monthly. Despite the increase in monitoring, 41% of people in Singapore say that they rarely or never take action based on the health data collected and 55% claim they modify their health-related behaviour but feel they can do more to stay healthy.

Crucially, the regional average figures show that a doctor's recommendation is the biggest motivator to start acting on personal health data-based insights (47%). In Singapore, 42% of people are more inclined to act on their digital health data if recommended by their doctor and healthcare providers. However, only 23% of Singaporeans are sharing this data regularly with their doctors or healthcare providers, with concerns around data privacy (35%) and a lack of know-how on sharing health data (20%) cited by respondents amongst the most common reasons why they are not yet sharing the data as often or widely as they could be. 15% of respondents also admitted that they don't know how to share data collected from their personal health devices with their doctor and 22% cite their limited awareness of health technology as a barrier to taking better care of their health.

"It is really encouraging to see that so many people in Singapore recognize the importance of maintaining their long-term good health and managing existing conditions. Monitoring is a great first step, but to see real benefits, more actions must be taken

when it comes to health," said Ivy Lai, General Manager, Philips Singapore. "As the government looks to ramp up its focus on preventive health via the Healthier SG initiative, there is also an urgent need for infrastructures to be put in place to connect healthcare professionals to personal health data in a safe and secure manner to ensure health recommendations benefit from such insights.

Education is also key to improve data literacy and usage. Our research highlights an urgent need for educating both the general population and healthcare professionals alike when it comes to using data and insights to improve preventive health in Singapore," added Ms Lai.

The latest Philips Future Health Index report, global research among healthcare leaders across 15 countries worldwide shows that APAC health sector is looking to data and predictive technologies as essential foundations of future healthcare systems. Confidence in data usage is high, with the majority healthcare leaders in the region saying that they can extract actionable insights from the available data (85%), have access to the necessary technology (84%) to utilize data. One in five (21%) healthcare leaders feel that staff training and education would be one of the best ways to help their facility to do more with data. Overcoming challenges such as data silos, technical infrastructure limitations, data privacy and security concerns, difficulties in managing high data volume would further improve data utilization.

Another way to encourage action might lie in making health technology smarter. Consumers in the region displayed an openness to interacting with health data according to the survey. In Singapore, health data-based prompts on personal health devices (35%) and simplified design of personal health technologies to make data easier to understand (37%) ranked highly as motivators for action.

"To encourage data-driven proactive health action by the consumer in 2023 and beyond, we need to do more than connect healthcare practitioners to personal health data. We see potential in also equipping consumers with smart recommendations to act on their data to achieve this. One example of how we're already doing this is through smart toothbrushes that are linked to consumer apps, effectively offering personalized guidance on brushing behaviour after analyzing users' habits and usage tendencies," said Muir Keir, Business Leader, Personal Health, Philips ASEAN Pacific.

Apart from leveraging on technology, Singaporeans are encouraged by real-life examples of how other people are modifying their lifestyles and behaviours based on their digital health data (37%) and insights.