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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russians Wrongly Think They're Healthy

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Boys eating burgers Tuesday near Red Square. Most Russians overestimate how healthy they are, a study says. **Igor Tabakov**

LONDON — Most Russians overestimate how healthy they are, and many run high health risks by smoking, abusing alcohol, being obese and failing to exercise, according to a report published Tuesday.

About 95 percent of Russians think they are in good or fair health, while only 44 percent saw a doctor last year, according to the survey by the Association of International Pharmaceutical Manufacturers, or AIPM, and the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Associations, or IFPMA.

This could be one of the main reasons why diagnosis of chronic illnesses such as heart disease, cancers and diabetes is low, the researchers said. Such illnesses are also known as noncommunicable diseases, or NCDs, and are the cause of the majority of deaths across the world.

"Heart disease, strokes, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory disease together are responsible for 80 percent of all deaths in Russia," said Vladimir Shipkov, AIPM's executive

director. "There is a significant gap between what people think is their state of health and the negative impact of their actual behavior."

The survey also found that most Russians know about links between the incidence of chronic disease and risk factors such as smoking, harmful drinking, unhealthy diets and low levels of physical activity.

But respondents to the survey tended to perceive these risks as a part of their regular lifestyle, researchers said.

The survey found that one to three key risk factors feature in the everyday life of 82 percent of respondents, and only 9 percent could say they had no risk factors.

The survey also found that doctors could be an important factor in changing these unhealthy habits — with more than 50 percent of respondents saying they were ready to give up risk factors if a doctor told them that their health were at risk.

"This study is very important in terms of preventing NCDs from spreading further because the fight against noncommunicable diseases starts on a personal level. Half of deaths and disability cases caused by NCDs can be prevented," said Mario Ottiglio of IFPMA.

He said the survey showed how it "makes sense to put considerable efforts into prevention programs."

"The benefits reaped would not limit themselves to improved health for individuals. ... There would also be relief from the mounting pressure on health care systems and the economic burden of such diseases on society as a whole," he added.

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