

More than half of health-conscious people suffer from digestive health problems

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More than half (54%) of health-conscious South Africans experience digestive health problems, according to the 2017 Cipla Digestive Health Survey conducted among 400 health-conscious individuals. Respondents indicated that 77% suffer from bloating, 76% said they have constipation and 28% experience regular diarrhoea.



Prof. Leon Dicks

Professor Leon Dicks, head of the probiotic and antimicrobial peptide lab in the Department of Microbiology at the Stellenbosch University, says that digestive health problems are caused by an imbalance of bacteria (microflora) in your gut. "Factors which can cause an imbalance of microflora in your gut include stress, lack of exercise, smoking, improper diet, travelling and antibiotics, to name a few."

Among the group of respondents of Cipla's Digestive Health Survey, only 22% were daily users of probiotics, while 35% of respondents of the survey indicated that they take a probiotic once a week.

Prof. Dicks recommends that all people take a quality probiotic daily to maintain a balance of microflora in the gut. He explains that a probiotic consists of live bacteria which disappear, together with their health benefits after a day. "Taking a daily probiotic will not only reduce your chances of experiencing digestive health problems, but will also promote a well-balanced immune system since about 75% of the body's immune system is located in the gut."

The survey found that 66% of the respondents believe that by consuming yoghurt daily they can achieve their daily requirement of probiotics. However, Prof. Dicks notes that the yoghurt cultures contained in one serving are not nearly enough. "In fact a person needs to consume about 40 litres of yoghurt per day to take in the required amount of probiotic flora needed to maintain a healthy gut."

He adds that when choosing a probiotic, consumers must select a probiotic which lines both the small and large intestine, which will be indicated on the packet. "It is therefore not about the number of strains in the probiotic but whether the strains lines, binds and protect the entire gut.

"There is no reason why so many people should experience digestive health problems. A good probiotic taken daily will help maintain digestive health and boost the immune system which will help people achieve an overall healthier, quality of life," concludes Prof. Dicks.

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