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Human nature thwarts optimum health



Adopting new approaches to prevent us from contracting chronic diseases is not just a personal challenge

As Easter is looming, some of us already know that eating large amounts of chocolate eggs will be too much of a temptation to resist. Yet, we all intuitively know that [too much sugar](#) or chocolate or anything else like [processed food](#), is not exactly healthy. Worse, we probably tell others around us—i.e. children, among others—that this over indulgence is not the way to go. Yet, throughout the year we indulge in even more of these foods, not even under any particular pretext.

This Easter chocolate binge is symptomatic of our approach to health. And to preventing chronic disease that may affect us later in life. Until we actually see from our very own eyes the damage done, are we not going to change. And even then, the way in which we are getting the message also matters, before we alter our dietary habits. Indeed, some public health experts have suggested harnessing behavioural sciences, and experimenting with so-called [nudging approaches](#).

Clearly, we are our own worst enemies, when it comes to keeping ourselves in good health and taking preventative steps. The trouble is that only multiple approaches can help. It is partly down to individual change of behaviour, going against human nature. But it is also down to the way food manufacturers inform customers about the content of their products. State-level regulations also could have a role to play to limit excessive intake of sugar or trans-fats. This, in turn, could trigger reactions from individuals, who feel that they are under the influence of a nanny state.

The lack of magic bullet does not lessen the need to find solutions to prevent people from contracting chronic diseases. It does, however, call for greater granularity in understanding why individuals act the way they do. And sometimes this level of clarity can only be gained from analysing hard data, which will make it possible to deduct our health status.

Greater visibility over our personal state of health could therefore come from measuring relevant indicators more systematically. This is where [wearable technology](#) comes into play. But this could begin to constitute a valuable prevention tool, if adequate precautions are put in place to take into account human nature's need to protect its privacy. Otherwise, some may decide that, on balance, preserving their right to privacy is more important than adopting preventative steps to protect their health.

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