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Welcome to Preventia's newsletter!



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Non-communicable diseases (NCDs), also known as chronic diseases, are diseases that are not transmissible from one person to another, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases. NCDs are the result of **unhealthy lifestyles**, e.g. tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diets and use of alcohol, leading to metabolic and physiological changes. In European countries, NCDs are responsible for an enormous part of the burden that public health systems in the Member States are facing. The increasing rates of deaths related to NCDs in Europe are concerning, but although running rampant, the complex health issues caused by NCDs can be tackled, if we improve prevention measures and promote health.

Healthy diets are a key aspect of our lifestyle, and can help tackling the rise of NCDs. A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats is essential for our overall health, and reduces the risk of chronic illnesses.

The **Preventia project aims to decrease the spreading of NCDs across the EU**, while reducing health inequalities and fostering cooperation and exchanges between the EU Member States.



Activities to be launched in 2025 by SAFE, LCI, EEKE, CEIP, Promote Ukraine, U.DI.CON, ADOC

Since the project launch in January 2024, we have laid strong foundations by partnering with **schools, migration centres, and healthcare institutions** to host our activities. We created tailored **training materials for schools** in disadvantaged areas, launched a **twinning programme for medical centres** to support peer learning, and designed a **culinary initiative** involving migrants and displaced people from Ukraine.

In 2025, we kicked off school trainings in [Greece](#), **Croatia**, and [Italy](#), and we held our first **culinary workshop with migrants in Athens**.

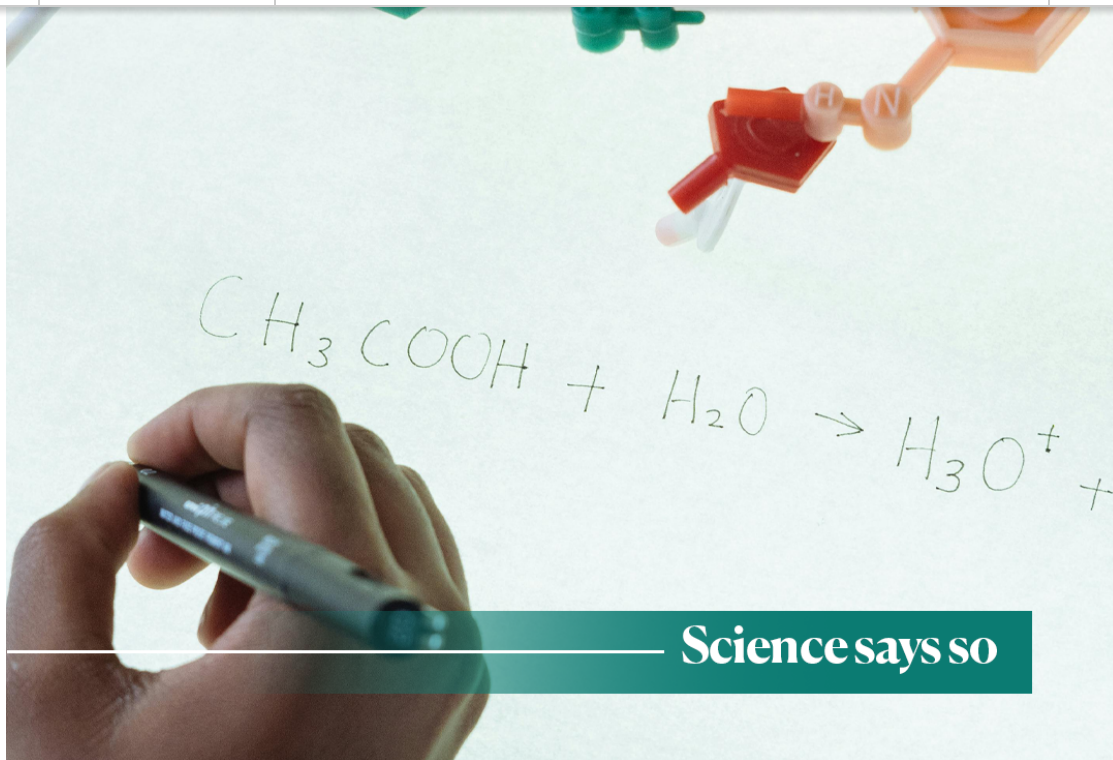
And there's more. We have launched **BiteWatch**, an innovative mobile app designed to help consumers make healthier and better-informed food choices when purchasing food products.

We are now entering the testing phase and invite you to join us:

- . **iOS users:** Install [TestFlight](#) and download [BiteWatch](#).
- . **Android users:** Get it from [Google Play](#) or use the [testing link](#).
- . **Feedback form:** Share your thoughts [here](#).

In addition, we are carrying out an **assessment of NCD policies** in partner countries to inform an upcoming policy brief and public health guidelines.

Looking ahead, we'll run **awareness campaigns** to boost health literacy and **organise workshops for NGOs and Ukrainian health professionals**, with a focus on health promotion and diabetes prevention.



Science says so

Uncover the most relevant scientific studies about non-communicable diseases, nutrition and health

Sweet taste preference on snack choice, added sugars intake, and diet quality– a pilot study, Guarneri, F., Cortes, L., et al., *BMC Nutrition*, 13 May 2025

People tend to choose snacks based on what tastes pleasant, particularly sweet options, but individual preferences and behaviours can influence this. This study found that a stronger preference for sweet tastes was linked to higher intake of added sugars and poorer overall diet quality, regardless of eating behaviour traits. Interestingly, sweet preference alone—not sugar intake or eating habits—was most strongly associated with diet quality.

Eating ultra-processed foods may harm your health, *American College of Cardiology*, 8 May 2025

New research presented at a major cardiology conference suggests that regularly consuming ultra-processed foods may increase the risk of a wide range of health issues, including heart disease, cancer, digestive disorders, and early death. These foods, often high in sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats, may disrupt metabolism, gut health, and inflammation, contributing to long-term harm. Experts recommend reducing intake of ultra-processed foods and replacing them with more nutritious, minimally processed alternatives to support better health outcomes.

Consumption of a diet high in fat and sugar is associated with worse spatial navigation ability in a virtual environment, Tran, Dominic M.D., Double, Kit S., et al., *International Journal of Obesity*, 17 April 2025

cardiovascular disease, and certain cancers. Emerging evidence also suggests it negatively impacts cognitive function, particularly in middle-aged and older adults, where regular consumption of such foods is associated with accelerated age-related cognitive decline. Experimental studies in rodents further support this, showing that diets rich in fats and sugars can impair brain function—especially in the hippocampus—affecting spatial learning and memory.

Diet quality and depression risk: A systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies, Molero, P., De Lorenzi, F., et al., *ScienceDirect*, 25 March 2025

The link between diet quality and depression remains uncertain, with current evidence offering only limited support for a clear association. While some studies suggest dietary improvements may help reduce depressive symptoms, particularly in non-clinical or postpartum populations, the overall strength of evidence is weak due to methodological limitations. Further high-quality research is needed to clarify whether specific dietary patterns, such as those rich in omega-3 or Mediterranean-style diets, can meaningfully influence mental health outcomes.

Optimal dietary patterns for healthy aging, Tessier, A.-J., Wang, F., et al., *nature medicine*, 24 March 2025

As the global population grows older, identifying diets that support not just disease prevention but overall healthy ageing is increasingly important. Long-term adherence to plant-rich dietary patterns—such as those high in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats—was linked to better cognitive, physical, and mental health in later life. The findings suggest that balanced diets with minimal ultra-processed foods may significantly improve the chances of ageing healthily and independently.



Uncover the most relevant news about non-communicable diseases, nutrition and health

[To Restore Your Gut Health, a Healthy Diet Matters Most](#), *Simonis Foundation*, 13 May 2025

A healthy diet is more effective than faecal transplants in restoring and safeguarding the gut microbiome, according to new research published in *Nature* by Joy Bergelson of the Simons Foundation and collaborators at the University of Chicago. The findings have implications for treating gastrointestinal conditions and enhancing recovery following antibiotic use.

[Why sugar is 'extremely dangerous' for your health](#), *Deutsche Welle*, 12 May 2025

Today, sugar is found in the majority of processed foods, and its overconsumption is linked to serious health issues such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. While sugar may not be chemically addictive like drugs, its impact on the brain and emotional regulation suggests it can lead to behavioural addiction, prompting calls for public health measures like sugar taxes and better food labelling.

[Map of Sugar Receptor Could Curb Our Cravings](#), *NeuroScience News*, 9 May 2025

For the first time, scientists have mapped the 3D structure of the human sweet taste receptor, shedding light on how we perceive sweetness and why we crave sugar. Using cryo-electron microscopy, they revealed how sweeteners interact with the TAS1R2 receptor, which functions much like a Venus flytrap. This breakthrough could pave the way for designing more effective sugar substitutes to help tackle obesity and diabetes, unlike current artificial sweeteners which often fall short.

A large international study suggests that high consumption of ultra-processed foods (UPFs) may be linked to an increased risk of early death, particularly in countries like the UK and US, where these foods make up over half of daily calorie intake. While the study cannot definitively prove causation, researchers highlight concerns over artificial ingredients and the nutritional profile of UPFs, which are often high in fat, sugar, and salt. Experts are calling for updated dietary guidelines and stronger public health measures, though some remain cautious about drawing firm conclusions from the current evidence.

Animal vs. plant protein: Global research reveals age-based longevity benefits, *Nutrition insight*, 22 April 2025

A global study across 101 countries found that adults who consume more plant-based than animal-based proteins tend to live longer. While animal proteins support infant survival, plant proteins are linked to greater longevity in adulthood and lower risks of chronic diseases. The findings highlight the importance of balancing protein sources for both health and sustainability, especially in resource-limited settings.

No drinks with sweeteners for younger children, say UK advisers, *BBC*, 3 April 2025

The UK's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) advises against giving young children drinks containing artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame and stevia, as they may reinforce a preference for sweet tastes. Instead, preschoolers should be encouraged to drink water to help establish healthier habits. While sweeteners may help older children reduce sugar intake and manage weight, this should be part of broader improvements in diet.

Drinking soda changes the way your body absorbs sugar — including from other food, *New York Post*, 28 March 2025

Research from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research shows that high-sugar diets can disrupt metabolism by increasing sugar absorption in the gut at the expense of other nutrients like proteins and fats. In experiments with mice, sugary drinks led to insulin resistance, glucose intolerance, and changes in liver and muscle function, raising the risk of diabetes and fatty liver disease. The study also found that liquid sugar is particularly harmful, as it causes rapid spikes in blood sugar and intensifies cravings more than sugar in whole foods.



EU Regulatory Updates

Find out the latest positions, progresses and regulatory developments on health, nutrition and NCDs prevention

From policy to plate: how countries can reduce salt intake and protect people's health, World Health Organization, 15 May 2025

Reducing salt intake is crucial to lowering high blood pressure and preventing cardiovascular diseases, yet most countries in the WHO European Region still exceed recommended levels. WHO/Europe is urging stronger public health policies, especially during Salt Awareness Week 2025, to address the widespread consumption of salt from processed foods. Portugal's experience shows that well-designed, data-driven policies with public support—such as setting salt limits in bread and using public food procurement—can lead to meaningful progress.

More taxes on sugary drinks, alcohol, and tobacco to fund health care, *EL PAÍS*, 3 May 2025

Latin America and the Caribbean are experiencing sluggish economic growth and rising public debt, leaving governments with limited fiscal space to address pressing issues like healthcare. Health taxes on products such as tobacco, alcohol, and sugary drinks offer a powerful yet underused tool to raise revenue and reduce non-communicable diseases, which are the region's leading cause of death. Despite strong evidence and public support, these taxes remain low, but recent moves by countries like Colombia, Brazil, and Barbados suggest growing momentum for change.

Cardiovascular Health Takes Centre Stage with New MEP Group, European Alliance for Cardiovascular Health, 17 April 2025

by MEP Romana Jerković (S&D, Croatia), this cross-party initiative aims to prioritise the prevention and management of cardiovascular disease (CVD) across EU health policy. The group is set to play a key role in driving forward a stronger, more coordinated European response to CVD.

World Obesity Day: EU-funded projects helping to fight childhood and adolescent obesity, European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA), 4 March 2025

4 March marks World Obesity Day, highlighting the serious health risks obesity poses, including its links to type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. A range of EU-funded projects under HaDEA are tackling childhood and adolescent obesity through innovative tools, educational programmes, and community-based interventions. From predictive health models and gamified apps to school-based initiatives and Living Labs, these efforts aim to promote healthier lifestyles, reduce health inequalities, and strengthen disease prevention across Europe.



Upcoming Events in the EU

Upcoming events on NCDs, prevention, and healthy nutrition

Jean Monnet Summer School on EU and Global Health, organised by European Association of Health Law, Global Health Law Consortium, Jean Monnet module “One Health: Global and EU Perspectives”, 3-6 June 2025, Fisciano SA, Italy

European Health Management Conference 2025 | Taking action to improve health for all, organised by European Health Management, 4-6 June 2025, Rennes, France

Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tackling the interplay between diabetes and obesity, organised by MEP Prof. Ignazio Marino and the European Diabetes Forum (EUDF), 24 June 2025, Brussels, Belgium

27th Austrian Health Promotion Conference on “Health for all! Health promotion – the path to the people”, organised by The Austrian Health Promotion Fund, 26 June 2025, Salzburg, Austria

23rd International Congress of Nutrition of IUNS, organised by the French Society of Nutrition (SFN), the French Federation of Nutrition (FFN), the Federation of European Nutrition Societies (FENS) and the International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS), 24-29 August 2025, Paris, France



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