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Europeans on health: Ventilation and letting in fresh air at home more important than exercise

No healthy home, no healthy life. Fresh air and plenty of daylight in the home are two surprising top scorers when Europeans are asked about what is important for their health. This is the conclusion of a new study, the Healthy Homes Barometer by the VELUX Group.

Avoid tobacco. Exercise. Eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Years of public debate have made Europeans keenly aware of these important guidelines for a healthy lifestyle. Even though the topic is much newer in the public debate, Europeans have nevertheless understood the importance of living in a healthy home.

This is the surprising conclusion from a new study among 12,000 Europeans in 12 countries. The study is the biggest yet to highlight Europeans' views and behaviour in relation to the healthy home.

A healthy home, or more accurately a home that supports a healthy human life, has been surveyed as part of a list of nine aspects of our everyday life that can make us more or less healthy. Of these nine, ventilating the home for fresh air comes out second, and having plenty of daylight in the home comes out fourth. And what we actually do the most in our home, sleeping well at night, comes out as the number one thing you need to make sure to look out for if you wish to stay healthy. Avoiding tobacco comes out sixth, whereas regular exercise comes out seventh among the nine.

The study was performed by the research institute, Wilke, in order to achieve a better understanding of how Europeans think about the healthy home, and Michael K. Rasmussen, Chief Marketing Officer of the VELUX Group, is surprised by the result:

"This is a very positive result. It is backed by scientific facts. It is a huge boost to the public debate about the healthy home that has been somewhat overshadowed by all the other health discussions."

Despite his optimism, Michael K. Rasmussen also sees warning signs. Given what we know about Europe's current building stock and Europeans' behaviour as documented by the Healthy Homes Barometer 2015, Europeans are perhaps in general too optimistic when it comes to the indoor environment in their homes. A new study from the Fraunhofer-Institut für Bauphysik from 2014 revealed that 80 million Europeans live in homes that are damp. Damp homes have an unhealthy indoor climate, which almost doubles the risk of developing asthma. In other words, if Europeans were more aware of how unhealthy their homes were,

they would probably be less satisfied.

The new study also shows that Europeans neglect to air out sufficiently in the cold winter months. Almost one quarter of all Europeans neglect the daily change of the indoor air in the wintertime.

Also, drying clothes indoors is a bad habit that Europeans apparently have a hard time shaking off. 65% of all Europeans dry clothes indoors a least once a week, thus increasing the risk of mould and dampness. A significant number of Europeans also sleep in less than complete darkness, thereby reducing the quality of their sleep.

"If our ambition is for Europeans to live in healthy homes, we need to address these issues. Because we are humans, we seem to have an intuitive understanding of how important our living environment is for our health, but this does not guarantee that we behave accordingly. There is still work to do when it comes to sharing knowledge about healthy living," said Michael K. Rasmussen.

About the Healthy Homes Barometer

The Healthy Homes Barometer is a study by the VELUX Group.

It is based on an analysis presenting key findings from a pan-European study investigating European citizens' attitudes and behaviour regarding home comfort, energy consumption and environmental impact. Once a year, changes in these indicators will be measured and reported in a Healthy Homes Barometer publication.

Methodology

During October 2014, a questionnaire was answered by 12,000 Europeans in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland and the UK.

The twelve countries surveyed represent more than 375 million Europeans, accounting for more than 70% of the total European population. Furthermore, the selected countries represent a variety of sizes and geographic locations.

The questionnaire and analysis were carried out by independent consultancies, Operate A/S and Wilke. Academic consultancy for the Healthy Homes Barometer is provided by Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Bernd Wegener, Humboldt University, Berlin.

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About the VELUX Group

For more than 70 years, the VELUX Group has created better living environments for people around the world. Making the most of daylight and fresh air through the roof.

Our product programme includes roof windows and modular skylights as well as a range of decoration and sun screenings, roller shutters, installation solutions and intelligent home controls. These products help to ensure a healthy and sustainable indoor climate. For work and learning. For play and pleasure.

We work globally – with sales and manufacturing operations in more than 40 countries and around 10,000 employees worldwide. The VELUX Group is owned by VKR Holding A/S, a limited company wholly owned by foundations and family.

For more information, visit www.velux.com.

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