

# Cape Town takes the prize as South Africa's healthiest city

Durbanites eat the least sugar and salt while Cape Town and Johannesburg residents are better at stocking up on fruit and vegetables.



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This is among the findings of the Discovery Vitality ObeCity Index 2017, released on Wednesday, which presents the latest insights on weight status as measured by Body Mass Index and waist circumference and food purchasing behaviour of nearly half a million Vitality members in Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban, Bloemfontein and Port Elizabeth.

Cape Town scores best with 53.5% of Capetonians having a normal weight status.

Johannesburg and Durban came in at second and third with 52% and 51.8%, respectively.

Port Elizabeth and Bloemfontein have the worst weight status, with 48.8% of residents having a healthy weight status in both cities.

"While there are some positive trends, we still have a lot to do to combat obesity," the index's authors said in a statement, noting the increased risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers and premature death.

"Our data shows that being obese increases healthcare costs by as much as R4,400 per person per year.

"It's no surprise that we find ourselves in this situation as our eating habits have changed for the worse in recent decades. In fact, statistics show that South Africans now spend more money on beer than on vegetables and fruit combined. We are increasingly foregoing whole, fresh foods in favour of energy-dense processed foods and sugary soft drinks. This is compounded by the fact that we're exercising less with more sedentary lifestyles."

In South Africa, sales of ready-made meals, snack bars and instant noodles increased by 40% between 2005 and 2010, Vitality said, adding fast food consumption continues to grow, negatively impacting our weight.

"We have a long way to go to reach a healthy weight status as a nation. South Africans in general consume insufficient portions of vegetables and fruit and too much sugar and salt."

Cape Town purchased the most portions of fruit and vegetables compared to other cities, followed by Johannesburg and Bloemfontein. Port Elizabeth and Durban purchased the least portions of fruit and vegetables.

Durban purchased 34% less fruit and vegetables compared to Cape Town, the winning city.

"We see a positive relationship between weight status and fruit and vegetable purchasing," said Discovery.

South Africans overall are eating only three servings of fruit and veg (230g) a day instead of the recommended five servings (400g), the index stated.

Durbanites purchased the least amount of salt compared to other cities, with second and third place being held by residents in Port Elizabeth and Pretoria, respectively. Johannesburg and Cape Town purchased the most amount of salt. The data shows Durban residents purchased just over a quarter less salt, than Johannesburg, the city with the highest amount of salt purchased.

Durban also had the lowest average number of teaspoons of sugar purchased compared to other cities, followed by Port Elizabeth and Pretoria, with Cape Town and Bloemfontein purchasing the most amount of sugar. Bloemfontein purchased 40% more sugar than Durban, the winning city

Commenting on the index, Discovery said its data shows that members who purchase healthy foods have a 10% lower BMI compared to those who purchase unhealthy foods. It states the same purchasing behaviour is associated with up to R2,500 lower health costs per year.

**Source:** *The Times*

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