



CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR DIETETIC RESEARCH

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For immediate release

Canadians are taking the “reduced sodium” message to heart – new study suggests how to support further change

Toronto, November 6, 2009 — In a large-scale cross-Canada survey to assess Canadians’ knowledge and behaviours regarding sodium intake, University of Alberta researchers Anna Farmer PhD, MPH, RD and Diana Mager PhD, RD found that the majority of Canadians believe they consume too much sodium, that most are aware that too much sodium can lead to health problems, but only half are actually doing something about it.

The researchers found that Canadians were somewhat knowledgeable about the potential health risks of too much sodium; most linked high salt intake with high blood pressure, and a majority believed that the Canadian diet is too high in salt. On the other hand, less than half of respondents were aware of how much salt is *too much*. Despite that gap in Canadians’ knowledge, about half of the survey participants were actually doing something to reduce sodium consumption, reporting that they never add salt either at the table or in their food preparations.

“It’s good news that Canadians understand some of the issues around excessive sodium consumption, and that at least half are willing to adjust their behaviour to reduce salt use,” says Dr. Farmer. “Most respondents in this survey understood that canned or processed foods are among the highest sources of dietary sodium. But the results also show that there’s still room for more education.”

Young adults between 18 and 24 years and families with young children are two important targets for sodium reduction messages according to these research findings. Fewer people in the 18 – 24 age group understood, for example, that salt is the major contributor to total sodium consumed, or that foods cooked from scratch are generally lower in sodium than prepared foods. Families with young children had the least confidence in their knowledge about dietary sodium and were less likely to read nutrition labels for sodium content.

The research project, a collaboration between the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research (CFDR) and the British Columbia Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport, is providing some much-needed information about Canadian’s sodium intake knowledge and behaviours.

“Understanding the knowledge gaps and behaviours is an important first step in helping Canadians to cut back on sodium for better health,” says Mary Sue Waisman, MSc, PDt, FDC, President of CFDR. “These research results can be used to inform future strategies to reduce sodium consumption.”

“We can lead healthier lifestyles by making simple, healthy food choices to reduce our daily intake of sodium, which helps to lower our blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease,” says Ida Chong, B.C.’s Minister of Healthy Living and Sport. “While the research results show that about half of Canadians are actively working to reduce their sodium consumption at the table and in preparing foods, we should continue to promote the health benefits of eating foods and drinking beverages that are low in sodium.”

CFDR, a charitable foundation created by Dietitians of Canada, has been funding nutrition research projects that support evidence-based dietetic practice for more than 16 years. The evidence resulting from CFDR-funded research projects allows Dietitians and other health professionals to provide science-based guidance and intervention in the prevention of chronic disease and pursuit of optimal health.

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Dr. Farmer will present more research results at the Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research on November 26, 2009 at the Delta Airport West Hotel. For more information, contact

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