



# CANADIAN FOUNDATION FOR DIETETIC RESEARCH

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## Helping Canadians Shake the Salt Habit

Toronto (ON) – Excess sodium in our diets can contribute to many serious health risks, yet Canadians have been reluctant to shake the salt habit. Current food intake surveys suggest that Canadians eat more than twice the amount of sodium actually needed for good health. Researchers at the University of Alberta are now investigating Canadians’ understanding of salt, salt intake, and their willingness to reduce their intake of salt, with the support of a grant from the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research (CFDR).

The grant for nearly \$50,000 is awarded to investigate the state of knowledge in dietary sodium intake in Canada. The award is a collaborative project between CFDR and the British Columbia Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport.

Principal investigators Anna Farmer PhD, MPH, RD and Diana Mager PhD, RD begin the project this month. The overall purpose of the research project, according to Dr. Farmer, is “to provide an understanding of perceptions and motivations to reduce dietary sodium in different settings and situations.”

By looking at individual factors (like people’s preferences and lifestyles), social environments (their networks and peers), and physical environments (like home, restaurants, child care centres) the researchers will get a broad understanding of the factors that influence sodium perceptions and intakes. Interviews with people in food production, agriculture, government and the health care system will assist the researchers to develop a picture of the information about sodium in foods and how to reduce intake to a healthier level that is promoted to Canadians. By reviewing sodium intake patterns, they hope to add to our current knowledge on how much sodium is consumed by Canadians, and determine the major sources.

“Only by gathering this information and definitively understanding the perceptions and behaviours that exist can we actually start to make changes in people’s dietary practices,” says Mary Sue Waisman MSc, PDt, President of the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research. “Once we have a solid evidence-based understanding, we can apply this information to support Canadians to cut back on sodium for better health. This research project has tremendous potential to shape future strategies aimed at reducing sodium intake.”

“By making simple, healthy choices to reduce our daily intake of sodium, we can lower our risks of heart disease and hypertension,” says Mary Polak, B.C.’s Minister of Healthy Living and Sport. “The partnership between the Canadian Foundation for Dietetic Research and the Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport will promote the importance of healthier food choices that contain less salt.”

The project will take place over the next 18 months.

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Anna Farmer is public health nutritionist and population health researcher. She is cross appointed to The Centre for Health Promotion Studies and The Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science at the University of Alberta. She teaches courses in community nutrition and research methods in health promotion to senior undergraduate and graduate students

Diana Mager has been a pediatric dietitian for more than 12 years. She is currently cross appointed to Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the University of Alberta. In this position, she is responsible for all dietetic- focused research within AHS-Edmonton area in Nutrition Services. In the University, she teaches advanced clinical nutrition to dietetic interns.

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 this research allows Dietitians and other health professionals to provide science-based guidance and intervention in the prevention of chronic disease and pursuit of optimal health.

- 30 -

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- 2 -