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Use the **editorial address** when writing about the newsletter—see the panel on page 4.

Few people at risk for heart disease understand food labels

The 2018 European Society of Cardiology Congress, held in Germany in August, was presented with a survey revealing gaps in use and awareness of important food nutritional labeling.

Key Points:

- ✚ Many consumers have difficulty using and understanding food labels, especially men and people at risk for heart disease, according to new research.
- ✚ Diet is considered a modifiable risk factor for heart disease prevention. In Ireland, as in many other nations, food labels provide nutritional information to help consumers make informed food choices. But this observational study identifies gaps in adults' use of food labels.

"People find food labels confusing and don't know what to look for," said Ms Claire Duffy, a clinical nurse specialist in general practice, MSc preventive cardiology, and the study's lead author from Ballina, Ireland, "They still have difficulty understanding and interpreting food labels."

The study involved 200 men and women, ages 18 to 85, attending a primary care practice. Ms Duffy devised a brief questionnaire administered during a one-month period in 2017. Participants supplied demographic data and answered questions about risk factors for cardiovascular disease as well as use and understanding of food labels.

Seventy-five percent were female; 40% self-reported being overweight or obese.

Significantly more women than men (65% versus 37%) always or often read food labels, the study found. Just 5% of females said they never look at food labels, compared with more than a third (35%) of males.

Participants didn't read labels

Having a risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD) did not necessarily translate into greater use of food labels. Notably, 40% of participants with CVD said they do not read food labels. Among CVD patients that do read labels, two-thirds (67%) read about fats, but only a third (33%) read about saturated fats, fibre, and salt.

Among participants who had a family member with diabetes, 56% read the sugar and 60% read the salt content of foods.

The study also reveals an important gap in label usage among people with elevated blood cholesterol.

Few people at risk for heart disease understand food labels ~ Continued:

“You would think people with high cholesterol would check the saturated fat content on food labels, but that did not always happen,” Ms Duffy said.

When asked to gauge whether a sample food product had low, medium, or high levels of fat, sugar, fibre, and sodium based on its nutrition label, participants had difficulty making sense of the information. Only 20% knew the product had a medium level of fat, and just 14% correctly identified its low-sugar content.

By contrast, most participants successfully deciphered a “traffic light” food label, where green, amber, and red colours are used to signify levels of fat, saturated fat, sugar, and salt.

One survey participant remarked that she knew more about the contents of her facial cream than the nutritional elements of the foods she purchases.

Said Ms Duffy: “Food labels need to be improved, especially for illiterate groups and those with colour and vision deficiency.”

Ms Duffy added that the study findings highlight the need for enhanced public education. This ought to begin with efforts across all educational settings to teach children and their parents about food labels, healthy eating, and nutrition. This should continue in adulthood with education provided through primary care, community settings, and media outlets. Perhaps supermarkets and Internet sites could establish dedicated “healthy food” sections with foods where people could easily find items low in sugar, salt, and fat, and high in fibre, Ms Duffy suggested.

Source: Dr Micheál Newell, PhD, and Prof Gerald Flaherty, National University of Ireland, Galway, and co-authors of the study. “Nutritional food labelling awareness in the community” was presented August 2018 during ESC Congress’ Session on Nutrition and Heart Disease.

Australian Health Food Partnership

Working together to improve your food

The Healthy Food Partnership (HFP) is a mechanism for the Australian government, the public health sector and the food industry to cooperatively tackle obesity, encourage healthy eating and empower food manufacturers to make positive changes.

The HFP’s Reformulation Working Group has developed draft reformulation targets for sodium, sugars and/or saturated fats, in 36 sub-categories of food. These food categories are amongst the highest contributors of sodium, sugars and saturated fat to Australian population level intakes.

Why consult? The HFP recognises that many food production companies are already reformulating their products to improve the nutritional quality and aims to build on (rather than replicate) these efforts. It is not the intention of the HFP to disadvantage companies that are already reformulating, but to recognise and support their efforts to date, and encourage those companies that are yet to engage in reformulation activities to move towards improving the nutritional profile of their products. Targets will create certainty for the food production industry of what they, and their competitors, should be aiming for.

Feedback is sought on the feasibility of the draft targets, the appropriateness of the draft category definitions (including products which are included or excluded), and the proposed implementation period (4 years). Consultation feedback, including from the general public, will inform the final recommendations. Various closing dates from September until November apply. For more information or to have your say, contact The Secretariat on 02 6289 9064 or email: healthyfoodpartnership@health.gov.au.

Looking to reduce high blood pressure / hypertension? Become a Salt Skipper.

Scots Tackle Obesity: Reducing Health Harms of Foods High in Fat, Sugar or Salt

The Scottish Government has sought to address their country's public health harm concerns for overweight and obese people, by tackling the promotion and marketing of foods the population needs to eat less of.

Approximately one third of the adult Scottish population are obese and nearly another third are overweight. Being overweight or obese can mean a life in ill health, and ultimately, an early death. People who live in the poorest areas are also more likely to be overweight and experience the most harm as a result.

Marketing and promotion sting

NHS Health Scotland published research in 2017 that showed marketing and promotions often made it cheaper to choose high fat, high sugar and high salt food and drinks and encourage people to eat more of the things they don't need in their diet. In late October, the Scots will look into the impact on purchasing of other types of promotions in places that sell food.

Laura Martin, Public Health Intelligence Advisor at NHS Health Scotland said: "It is not fair that the majority of people in Scotland could get ill or die early because they are overweight or obese. It's also not fair that people in our poorest areas are at more risk – where you live should not determine whether you live in ill health or die early. Our environment affects our health. That's why we need to take action to ensure that our environment supports us to live long and healthy lives, by making the healthy choice, the easy choice."

"Our evidence shows that promotions work against this. They encourage unplanned, impulsive purchases – usually on food that we should be eating less of – and this means we eat calories we don't need.

Placing restrictions on promotions and marketing of high fat, sugar and salt foods therefore has the potential to help make the healthier choice the easier choice.

What's more, our research on public attitudes to obesity shows that we should be confident in Scotland about taking such actions, safe in the knowledge that the majority of the public understand the need for and support the actions," said Ms Martin.



Source: www.healthscotland.scot/news

SSN Last words...

As promised: All the way from Dublin...several email exchanges were welcomed from Kerrygold about the difficulty in buying Pure Irish Unsalted Butter with no shenanigans to report. In fact, the good folk in Dublin went out of their way to help. Seems folks in the big smoke Australian cities will have no probs buying Kerrygold – just us country bumpkins that dip out yet again and need to search the odd Woollies to find this grand unsalted butter product.

Be quick to buy up the last of Campbell's NAS stock range. Stock supplies, just like Winter, have come to a halt until next year!

And what do I eat? A lot of "prepared from scratch homemade meals" low in sodium, a lot of vegetables and fruit, grains - no bread, unsalted nuts, some fish, meat (no small animals), no processed foods or anything loaded with salt, no take-aways or eating out. Boring hey! But it works for me. FW.

Become a Salt Skipper

Please send us your Salt Skip news, tips and salt-free or low sodium recipes... email to Malcolm.Riley@csiro.au. Thanks!

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Beef in Red Wine for One



Ingredients: (Serves 1, cooking time 20 minutes)

1 tbsps olive oil
200g sirloin or rump steak
1 small onion, sliced
1 garlic clove, finely sliced
Pinch of dried oregano or fresh oregano leaves
1 Glass of red wine
200g can chopped tomatoes (No added salt, La Gina brand from
Coles or Woolies recommended)
Ground pepper

Method:

Heat oil in a medium pan. Fry steak for 2 minutes on each side until brown. Remove steak to a plate, and then fry the onion, garlic and oregano in the same pan. Fry for 5 minutes until starting to turn golden.

Tip the wine and tomatoes into the pan, then simmer for 10 minutes until thickened and rich. Slice the steak into chunks, return to the pan with any juices, and then simmer for a few minutes to reheat. Can be served with potatoes and green vegetables or pasta.

Season to taste with pepper before serving, garnished with fresh oregano (if using).

A rich and warming casserole for one. Enjoy with a glass of the red!

At Salt Skip News, we are always interested to hear from readers. Please send us your Salt Skip news, tips and salt-free or low sodium recipes... please email to Malcolm.Riley@csiro.au

BP Monitor with Salt Skip News is published every 2 months, from February to December (6 issues a year). This newsletter is not a substitute for health and medical advice. Readers should always seek the advice of a qualified health professional regarding their health or a medical condition.

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