

## Canadians not as nutrition savvy as they think they are:

### Latest results from Tracking Nutrition Trends VII survey

The Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition, a leading Canadian nutrition organization dedicated to helping Canadians make informed food choices, is releasing results from the latest Tracking Nutrition Trends VII survey (TNT VII) – a national survey that reports on Canadians' nutritional knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.

Although eight out of 10 Canadians consider themselves very, or at least somewhat, knowledgeable about nutrition, the TNT VII reveals some interesting facts demonstrating that we aren't as nutrition savvy as we think we are. Here's a closer look:

#### First the bad news ...

- Nearly one quarter of those surveyed consider their health (25 per cent) and eating habits (26 per cent) to be poor or fair.
- Most Canadians (77 per cent) eat while engaged in another activity (e.g. watching TV, driving, checking e-mails) at least once a day. *Eating while distracted leads to overeating by making you less focused on hunger signals and the amount of food you've eaten.*
- Less than two thirds of Canadians eat breakfast (58 per cent) or lunch (62 per cent) daily, *Skipping lunch or breakfast can reduce memory and concentration, and sabotage efforts to stay slim. Eating breakfast also kick-starts your metabolism and prevents you from over eating later in the day.*
- Canadians eat out regularly, with 10 to 15 per cent eating out two or more times per week.
- Less than one quarter (22 per cent) of Canadians look for nutrition information while eating out.
- Most Canadians (75 per cent) are keenly aware that omega-3 fatty acids (found in oily fish, flaxseed, walnuts and canola oil) are essential to a healthy diet, but we continue to be confused when it comes to types of fat. *Four in 10 Canadians mistakenly believe that non-hydrogenated (or soft) margarine contains less fat than butter (it doesn't!), and another 21 per cent don't know. Thirteen per cent believe that hard, stick margarine is better for you than soft margarine and one-third of Canadians don't have a clue.*
- Most of us know that reducing fat in the diet can lower cholesterol in the blood. But nearly two-thirds (63 per cent) of Canadians think that the amount of cholesterol you eat is a major factor affecting blood cholesterol. *The truth is cholesterol in foods has little or no impact on most people's cholesterol levels. It's your intake of saturated and trans fats that matters most - both types raise LDL or "bad" cholesterol.*
- Canadians are largely unaware of the adverse effects of trans fatty acids. This is surprising given the general trend to avoid trans fats. *Less than one third (32 per cent) of Canadians know that trans fatty acids have the same effect as saturated fats. One quarter (24 per cent) of Canadians believe that trans fats do not have the same effect as saturated fat, and another one quarter (27 per cent) of Canadians simply do not know.*
- Despite the overwhelming scientific evidence of the importance of a daily vitamin D supplement for Canadians, *only 20 per cent report taking a single vitamin or mineral supplement and four in 10 Canadians take a multivitamin supplement.*

- Only 57 per cent of people regularly read food labels to seek out ingredient information, nutrient content and “best before” dates.
- Although 82 per cent of Canadians believe dietitians are the most credible source of nutrition information, *most of us are getting nutrition information from more accessible sources like product labels (68 per cent), the Internet (51 per cent), magazines, newspapers and books (46 per cent), and friends and relatives (41 per cent).*
- Canadians seem to have a short-term view of the impact of food on overall health – only 66 per cent said that “living longer” influences their food choices. *For the majority of Canadians, maintaining good health (87 per cent), gaining energy or stamina (74 per cent), and weight management and body image (68 per cent) are factors that influence the food choices they make.*
- When it comes to food safety, only 32 per cent of Canadians are concerned about food handling, preparation or storage, and only 24 per cent are concerned about food additives or pesticides (17 per cent).
- Most of us aren't very concerned whether a food is organically grown, contains probiotics, has a low glycemic index, or is produced using biotechnology. *Close to one-third of Canadians are not aware or don't care about these factors.*
- Only 10 per cent say they're concerned about where their food comes from (e.g. country of origin).

### **But the good news is...**

- Half of us consider nutrition "very important" when deciding what to eat.
- The top five nutrient factors that sway our food decisions are: low in trans fat, made from whole grains, low in sugar, low in sodium and contains omega-3 fats.
- Ninety-five per cent of Canadians who use food labels are able to find the information they need and use it to determine the nutrient and calorie contents of foods, to make comparisons among foods and to determine if the food contains a specific ingredient.
- We understand that some types of fibre can lower blood cholesterol and that a high-fibre diet may help prevent colon cancer.
- Canadians like to snack – an important way to keep blood sugar levels in check and prevent over-eating at the next meal. Sixty-seven per cent of Canadians report eating one or two snacks every day.
- Six out of 10 Canadians say they've made an effort in the past year to adopt a healthier diet. The top five improvements were eating more vegetables, more fibre and whole grains, less fat, less sugar and fewer calories.
- Canadians who never eat out (breakfast, lunch or dinner) rate both their eating habits and their health higher than those who do eat out.

### **TNT VII Methodology**

The online sample for TNT VII was a random sample drawn from the TNS Canadian Facts proprietary consumer panel. The TNS panel is a community of interactive respondents that currently numbers more than 95,000 Canadians having a cross-section of sociodemographic characteristics.

The sample was drawn to be representative of the Canadian population 18 years of age and older based on age, within gender and region (based on the 2006 Canadian Census). In total, 9,012 invitations were sent and 2,003 surveys were completed, for a completion rate of 22 per cent.

TNS Canadian Facts conducted all fieldwork, data processing and analysis in-house. The survey instrument was developed in consultation with CCFN and its advisory panel and was designed to build on and expand previous efforts.

### **About The Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition**

The Canadian Council of Food and Nutrition (CCFN) is a leading, non-profit organization that champions evidence-based solutions and advocates for policy change to key nutritional issues affecting all Canadians. CCFN works to promote public understanding of food and nutrition issues including food safety, childhood obesity prevention, food surveillance, food labelling, sodium, vitamin D and trans fat. CCFN was formed in 2004 out of a merger of the National Institute of Nutrition and the Canadian Food Information Council. For more information, visit [www.ccfm.ca](http://www.ccfm.ca).

- 30 -

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