

# The CFIC Short Answer

A CFIC Report on late-breaking food and nutrition controversies

April 26, 2002

## **Acrylamide in our food**

### The controversy

A study released from Sweden, April 25, 2002, links acrylamide in our food to cancer in humans. Acrylamide forms when starch-containing foods such as rice, potatoes, and bread, are heated at high temperatures.

### The facts

- The media coverage of the acrylamide controversy has been extensive.
- The release of the study results before publication in a scientific journal makes it difficult to comment on study design and findings.
- The study is approved for publication in the Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry.
- Limited data exists on acrylamide as a human carcinogen.
- Animal research suggests acrylamides at high doses can cause cancer.
- Acrylamide levels in food vary and little is known about what influences variability.
- Acrylamide is not new to the scientific world. It is the base for the creation of the compound polyacrylamide that has been used for years in the treatment of drinking water. The World Health Organization *Guidelines for Drinking Water Quality* specify the safe levels of acrylamide for drinking water.
- Acrylamide has other industrial uses.
- More research is needed to understand the impact of acrylamide on human health
- It is premature to recommend that consumers change their eating behaviour.

### The long answer

CFIC will continue to monitor the acrylamide controversy and send updates.

We will review the study, once published, and discuss the study findings with the toxicologists at Health Canada.

### **CFIC is committed to putting controversies In Context**

*The Canadian Food Information Council (CFIC) is a national, non-profit organization that works in partnership with the food, nutrition, health and scientific community, nationally and internationally and with media, nationally. Visit us on the web at: <http://www.cfic.ca>*