

SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE ON DIET AND NUTRITION

[See linked sheets on **obesity** and **physical activity**]

KEY FACTS

- Most children and adults do not meet dietary recommendations.
- An estimated one in three deaths from cancer and one in three deaths from coronary heart disease are attributable to poor diet.
- Consuming at least five portions of fruit and vegetables a day can reduce the risk from heart disease, stroke and cancer by up to 20%.
- A reduction in the salt intake of the population to 6g per day would result in an estimated reduced incidence of coronary heart disease by 6%, stroke by 15%, and hypertension by 17%.
- Reducing fat intake, particularly saturated fat, can help lower the risk of coronary heart disease and some cancers.
- Infants who are breastfed are five times less likely to be admitted to hospital in the first year of life with infections and are less likely to become obese in later childhood.
- Mothers who breastfeed their baby are less likely to develop pre-menopausal breast cancer.
- Treating ill health related to poor diet is estimated to cost the NHS at least £4 billion each year.

Inequalities exist

- Children and adults in lower social classes eat around half the fruit and vegetables of people from professional groups.

WE ARE NOW GOING TO...

Health in the consumer society

- By mid 2005 we aim to have introduced a system that could be used as a standard basis for signposting foods. This will build on the nutrient criteria for the 5 A DAY logo.
- Continue to work with industry with the 5 A DAY logo, working with retailers, caterers, manufacturers and producers to promote the 5 A DAY message.
- Lead discussions with industry to identify action to: increase the availability of healthier food, reverse the trend towards bigger portion sizes, and adopt consistent and clear standards for information on food.
- Work with industry to develop voluntary action based on: targets for reducing sugar and fat in food, and guidance on portion sizes.
- We will work with industry, advertisers, consumer groups and other stakeholders to encourage new measures to strengthen existing voluntary codes on food and drink promotion to children, including: setting up a new food and drink advertising and promotion forum and contributing funding to new health initiatives and positive health campaigns.

Children and young people – starting on the right path

- From 2005, provide vouchers to eligible pregnant women to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, milk and infant formula, through a new scheme called *Healthy Start*. This will be backed up by a communications campaign.
- Press for amendments to the relevant EU directive on infant formula and follow-on formula.
- Expand the School Fruit and Vegetable Scheme, so that by the end of 2004 all four to six-year-old children in LEA-maintained infant, primary and special schools in England will be eligible for a free piece of fruit or vegetable every school day.

- Invest over the next three years to improve nutrition in school meals by:
 - revising both primary and secondary school meals standards to, reduce the consumption of fat, salt and sugar and increase the consumption of other essential nutrients. Introduce nutrient based standards that will be taken into account in Ofsted inspections;
 - subject to legislation, extending the new standards to cover food across the school day, including vending machines and tuck shops; and
 - providing new guidance on food procurement for heads and governors, and improving training and support for school meal providers and catering staff.
- Put in place a comprehensive package to assist schools across England in implementing the whole school approach to healthy eating and drinking. The package will pull together information on healthier breakfast clubs, tuck shops, vending machines, lunch boxes, cookery clubs, water provision, growing clubs and dining room environment. The package will be fully integrated into the Healthy Schools Programme and supports the Healthy Living Blueprint.
- Provide guidance and resources which will be available from early 2005 for schools to encourage, for example, cooking clubs for children and manage healthy vending machines, as well as including healthier breakfast clubs, tuck shops, lunch box provision, growing clubs and the dining room environment.

Local communities leading for health

- Develop guidance on good practice in public sector food procurement and nutritional standards for all foods provided by the NHS, schools, the Prison Service and the Ministry of Defence.
- Commission nutritional guidance for caterers and look at opportunities to promote that guidance into the private sector through the introduction of a 'Healthy Eating' award.

Health Development Agency evidence briefings summarise evidence on the effectiveness of approaches to promote health, and include *The Effectiveness of Public Health Interventions to Promote the Initiation of Breastfeeding* (2003).

(www.hda-online.org.uk/documents/breastfeeding_summary.pdf)

and *The Management of Obesity and Overweight* (2003)

(www.hda.nhs.uk/documents/obesity_evidence_briefing_summary.pdf)

WHAT THE CONSULTATION RAISED

The most common subjects raised in the submissions on diet and nutrition in the *Choosing Health?* consultation were: food advertising to children and more or improved labelling. Other issues raised included school meals, vending machines, tax on food, home economics education, breastfeeding, breakfast clubs, parenting, the Healthy Schools Standard, the role of employers and the food industry, free fruit in school, subsidised fruit and vegetables, and 'food deserts'.

A similar range of views were found in responses to the *Choosing a Better Diet* Consultation, which took more detailed views on priorities for action, including:

- improving education and information about diet and nutrition, especially food labelling;
- improving the diet of children and young people, particularly in schools;
- increasing the range of healthier foods;
- improved access to healthy foods; and
- increased support from the NHS.

WHAT WE ARE DOING ALREADY

Pre-school

- Health visitors provide information and support to parents on a range of parenting issues including breastfeeding, infant nutrition and healthy diet.

- NHS maternity services provide a range of practical advice and support to encourage mothers to start and continue to breastfeed.
- Sure Start Local Programmes, Children's Centres, Early Excellence Centres, Neighbourhood Nurseries and other childcare settings provide guidance and support to young families on infant feeding, weaning, healthy eating and nutrition.

In schools and colleges

- The National Healthy Schools Standard promotes a 'whole school approach' to the health of schoolchildren, teachers and parents. More than 8,000 schools are healthy schools and of these nearly 3,000 are actively promoting healthy eating.
- The Food in Schools programme encourages schools to look at ways to improve their pupils' diet and includes guidance and training for teachers.
- There are opportunities to teach about food, nutrition, healthy eating, cooking, safety and hygiene across the national curriculum within science; design and technology; and Personal, Social and Health Education.
- The School Milk Scheme encourages schools to make milk available, taking advantage of milk subsidised by the EU.
- Standards for secondary and primary school meals.

Patients

- Health professionals provide advice on diet, especially to patients on 'at risk registers' for coronary heart disease and diabetes.

Consumers

- Nutrition labelling is currently only required by law on those products that make nutrition claims such as low fat or high calcium, but in practice such labelling appears on the majority of pre-packed food.

Communities

- Local initiatives to improve access to healthy food especially in disadvantaged areas include breakfast clubs and food co-operatives.

Campaigns

- The 5 A DAY programme aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption by increasing access to and awareness of the benefits of fruit and vegetables. The New Opportunities Fund has allocated £10 million to support 66 local 5 A DAY programmes in deprived areas led by PCTs.
- A 5 A DAY logo has been developed as part of the communications programme, to help people recognise the 5 A DAY message. It is the first government-licensed consumer logo, and already over 400 organisations are licensed to use it, including a number of retailers and food manufacturers with high volume sales such as Asda, Boots, Iceland, McDonalds and Tropicana fruit juice.

WE WILL HAVE DELIVERED IF...

...we move the balance of the national diet in England towards that recommended by experts and halt 'the year-on-year rise in obesity among children under 11 by 2010 in the context of a broader strategy to tackle obesity in the population as a whole' (2004 Government PSA target).