

**Food and Fitness in Focus  
National Institute of Nutrition  
Canadian Diabetes Strategy Project  
March, 2001-March 2003**

**Project Summary**

Food and Fitness in Focus was a joint collaboration of the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), ParticipACTION, the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute (CFLRI) and Dietitians of Canada. A national advisory committee comprised of nutrition and physical activity experts provided direction and feedback to all phases of the project. A list of advisory committee members can be found below.

The goal of this project was to provide men and women aged 35 to 55 years of age, who are at increased risk of developing diabetes, with better access to consistent messages, effective tools and relevant resources that would promote healthy eating, support active living and the achievement of healthy body weights in order to reduce their risk of developing Type 2 diabetes.

**Summary of Activities:**

**Literature Review**

A comprehensive literature review documenting the needs, challenges and obstacles facing the target group was completed in August of 2001. This review has since been published in NIN Review (Volume 32 and 33, 2002) and is available on the NIN website in it's entirety.

**Focus Group Research**

In December, 2001, National Qualitative Research was completed by Allium Consulting Group, using focus groups in 6 cities across Canada to determine perceived needs, obstacles and challenges to adopting healthy eating and active living habits of the target group. Resource options were recommended. A summary of this research is provided on the NIN website. Anyone wishing a copy of the full report can contact Allium Consulting Group at 613-230-9666 or the Diabetes Strategy at 613-954-8672.

**Resource Development and Evaluation**

Based on the Whistler Conference in Dec. 2001 ("Communicating Physical Activity and Health Messages"), the results of the literature review and the focus group research, an ***E-mail messaging strategy*** was determined to be the resource of choice. Twelve weeks of healthy living messages were developed in a joint effort by the University of Alberta and the advisory committee. A physical activity and nutrition component were combined into each message which were based on established Canadian sources such as Canada's Food Guide to

Healthy Eating and Vitality, Canada's Physical Activity Guide and a previously developed library of physical activity messages that had been piloted in print format by Plotnikoff and colleagues. The messages were reviewed by the Food and Fitness in Focus Advisory Committee, Federal /Provincial /Territorial Groups on Nutrition, Fitness and Recreation as well as a number of other physical activity and nutrition experts. The final messages were reviewed and modified by a professional writer. A copy of the final messages that were used is available on the NIN website in both French and English.

**a) University of Alberta Healthy Eating and Active Living Electronic Messaging Project**

The University of Alberta, under the direction of co-principal investigators, Ron Plotnikoff PhD and Linda McCargar PhD RD, piloted 12 weeks of these messages to workplaces in Alberta in a controlled study during September to November 2002. A total of 2599 employees received the messages. Results of this research will be published and presented by Drs. McCargar and Plotnikoff in the upcoming year. The research group has also prepared a technical report based on this evaluation for publication in NIN's Rapport. Citations for these publications will become available on the NIN website when they become available.

**b) National Institute of Nutrition Healthy Bites Consumer Pilot**

The same messages were available to the public in both official languages on the NIN website as a pilot study in November 2002.

Prior to the consumer launch, several nutrition and physical activity groups were contacted and informed of the upcoming availability of the messages on the NIN website. These groups promoted this launch and informed their members, who then informed consumers, that they could register for the twelve weeks of Healthy Bites messages. The following groups were involved in the promotion of this launch: Dietitians of Canada, Leisure Information Network, Ontario Public Health Association Bulletin, Ontario Society of Nutritionists in Public Health, National Institute of Nutrition Members and Councils, Federal/ Provincial/ Territorial Groups on Nutrition and Physical Activity and Recreation, Specialty Food Shop Hospital For Sick Children Website, Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology and Food and Fitness in Focus Advisory Committee.

A total of 1200 consumers from across Canada registered to receive the Healthy Bites messages (approximately 50 received them in French). Two surveys of these recipients were administered; one closed-ended survey (666 respondents), identical to that used by the University of Alberta in their study and a second, open-ended, more qualitative survey (292 respondents; a sub-set of the first survey). Both surveys were available in French and English. Overall, most respondents were very much in favour of the e-mail format and the frequency of delivery (once a week). Generally they liked the content of the messages with many suggestions for improvement. There was a general desire for more detail

and /or more sophisticated information. Most were not impressed with the appearance and presentation of the information; the appearance of the messages may well have affected the respondents' views of the content and delivery method.

Recommendations for improvement were provided by respondents and summarized in the final report. A summary report of the evaluation of the Healthy Bites launch is available on the NIN website.

### **Dissemination**

A project summary and all reports (or summary of) will be available on the NIN website in April 2003.

A summary of the entire project will be presented by Dr. Linda McCargar as an abstract at the Dietitians of Canada annual meeting, June 2003.

The results of the University of Alberta study will be published and presented at scientific meetings in the upcoming year.

The project summary and notification of the NIN website page will be sent in April 2003 to all Partners, and those who assisted in the project at various stages.

All reports and the messages will be forwarded in April, 2003 to the Canadian Diabetes Strategy for their inventory.

All reports (with the exception of the U of A results and the Healthy Bites consumer pilot- until they have been published) will be forwarded in April, 2003 to the Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, the Network for Healthy Eating, the Leisure Information Network, and the Nutrition Resource Centre for their respective inventories.

### **1) Food and Fitness in Focus Advisory Committee**

The advisory committee met with the NIN president and the project manager via teleconference at least once every quarter. The committee was instrumental from the beginning of the project and provided insight and expertise at all stages.

The committee received regular updates through e-mail and by phone regarding the project's progress and to consult on issues relevant at the time. The committee reviewed and approved: the literature review, the focus group discussion guide, the focus group executive summary, the NIN Review articles, the evaluation proposal for the e-mail messaging research, the e-mail messages, the evaluation tools for both studies and dissemination of evaluation results via the NIN website

### **The Food and Fitness in Focus Advisory Committee**

Ms. Louise Aubrey; Office of Nutrition Policy and Promotion, Health Canada

Ms. Heidi Bates; RD, Dietitians of Canada

Ms. Cora Lynn Craig; President and CEO, Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute

Ms. Nancy Dubois, Health Promotion Consultant and trainer, Du B Fit

Dr. Mary Flynn; Calgary Regional Health Authority

Dr. Catherine Gaul, University of Victoria, School of Physical Education

Ms. Anne Kennedy; Past President, National Institute of Nutrition

Ms. Ellen Lakusiak, MSc., RD, Food and Fitness in Focus Project Manager

Dr. Lucie Lévesque; University of Montreal; School of Physical and Health Education, Queen's University

Dr. Robert Ross; School of Physical and Health Education, Queen's University

Dr. Art Salmon; National Director, ParticipACTION

### **2) Canadian Diabetes Strategy Partners:**

The National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) would like to thank its partners for their assistance and support in the initiation, development and completion of this Food and Fitness in Focus Project:

**Dietitians of Canada**

**ParticipACTION**

**Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute**

**Health Canada**

### **3) University of Alberta- Healthy Eating and Active Living Electronic Messaging Project:**

Co-Principal Investigators: Linda McCargar PhD, RD and Ron Plotnikoff PhD

Gloria Klinge and Marie Carlson, Project Co-ordinators

### **4) Participants in the Healthy Bites Launch:**

Many groups and individuals were instrumental in assisting The National Institute of Nutrition in the Healthy Bites Launch. These include, The Federal/Provincial Territorial Groups on Nutrition and Physical Activity (Health Canada), Ontario Society of Nutritionists in Public Health, Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, The Hospital For Sick Children Specialty Food Shop, Leisure Information Network, Scientific Advisory Committee of National Institute of Nutrition, Ontario Public Health Association, many member companies of NIN and individual members and many interested health professionals including the Food and Fitness in Focus Advisory Committee.

NIN is also fortunate to have received donations of books and CDs from health professionals to use as incentives for consumers to participate in our evaluation at the end of the e-mail project. The following books have been donated by the authors and were chosen as prizes because they are credible and current Canadian publications on healthy living. We sincerely thank these authors for their donation.

*Cook Great Food.* Dietitians of Canada, Robert Rose, 2001  
*The Ultimate Healthy Eating Plan.* Liz Pearson, R.D. and Marilyn Smith, H.Ec.,  
Whitecap, 2002  
*You Count, Calories Don't.* Linda Omichinski, B.Sc., (F.Sc.), R.D., HUGS  
International Inc., 2001  
*Staying off the Diet Roller Coaster.* Linda Omichinski, B.Sc., Advice Zone, 2000  
*Tailoring Your Tastes.* Linda Omichinski, B.Sc., and Heather Wiebe Hildebrand,  
R.N., B.Sc., Tamos Books Inc., 1995  
*Beaten Tracks* (CD). Martin Collis, Ph.D.  
*The Little Book of Lifestyle Artistry.* Martin Collis, Ph.D., Speakwell  
*Active Living.* Gordon Stewart. Human Kinetics, 1995  
*10 Steps to Healthy Eating.* Leslie Beck, R.D., Penguin Books, 2002  
*The Healthy Boomer.* Peggy Edwards, Miroslava Lhotsky M.D. and Judy Turner  
PhD. McClelland and Stewart, 2000  
*The Juggling Act: The Healthy Boomers Guide to Achieving Balance in Midlife.*  
Peggy Edwards, Miroslava Lhotshy, M.D., and Judy Turner, PhD. McClelland  
and Stewart, 2002