



SENATOR THE HON JAN McLUCAS

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Study Confirms Insufficient Iodine In Our Food

The Parliamentary Secretary for Health and Ageing, Senator Jan McLucas, said today Food Standards Australia New Zealand's latest Australian Total Diet Study confirms that many Australians are not getting enough iodine in their food.

"Insufficient iodine intake, particularly in groups such as pregnant women, babies, and young children, is of great concern," Senator McLucas said.

"Mild to moderate iodine deficiency can result in children having learning difficulties and can affect the development of motor skills and hearing. In extreme cases it can result in severe intellectual disability.

"The findings of the study confirm the necessity of the mandatory addition of iodine to bread, which is to be introduced by FSANZ by September next year. About 43 per cent of Australians have an inadequate intake of iodine, and FSANZ estimates that this will drop to no more than five per cent after iodine fortification of bread."

Women aged 19 to 49, which covers most of their childbearing years, need between 100 and 200 micrograms of iodine a day and the study showed 70 per cent were not getting enough. Ten per cent of children aged two to three years were not getting enough.

Ninety-six types of food were tested in a "table-ready" state for the trace elements selenium, chromium, molybdenum and nickel as well as iodine. While the survey showed that most Australians have adequate dietary intakes of three of the other four nutrients, selenium intake needs further investigation.

The FSANZ Chief Scientist, Dr Paul Brent, said that the agency had taken a new approach in producing a world-leading total diet study focussed exclusively on nutrients. "It is the first major study to assess nutrition against *Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand*, recently released by the National Health and Medical Research Council," Dr Brent said.

He said FSANZ had broadened the scope of the study to include a wider range of substances, including additives and nutrients, as the more traditional testing of pesticide residues and contaminants continually showed that levels of these chemicals in the Australian food supply were safe. FSANZ will continue to monitor pesticide residues, although on a less frequent basis every five years.

The ATDS is conducted about every two years to ensure the Australian food supply is safe and nutritious. The 23rd ATDS is already under way and will cover a large range of pesticide residues and veterinary chemicals, as well as selenium, fluoride, aluminium, arsenic, cadmium, copper, iron, lead, mercury and zinc, and toxins present in fungus and mould.

The full report can be found on the Food Standards Australia New Zealand website www.foodstandards.gov.au.

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