Blood Pressure Management: Communicating Comprehensive Lifestyle Strategies Beyond Sodium

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Lifestyle Changes Key to Blood Pressure Management

EXPERTS IN NUTRITION TODAY ARTICLE URGE HOLISTIC APPROACH, RATHER THAN ONLY SODIUM FOCUS

While many public health officials and healthcare providers view reducing sodium intake as the primary strategy to lower blood pressure, a 2010 expert Roundtable indicates that strategies that encourage lifestyle modifications could yield better results, concludes an article published in the peer-reviewed journal Nutrition Today.

In 2010, IFIC convened a Roundtable discussion with 10 leaders in the fields of chronic disease, food science, nutrition, communications, public health and public policy to discuss a comprehensive diet and lifestyle approach to blood pressure management. The experts agreed that meeting government sodium intake recommendations (1500 mg/d) is challenging, but emphasizing a holistic approach that focuses on positive messaging and strategies like weight management, eating more fruits and vegetables, engaging in physical activity and moderating alcohol intake is needed to manage high blood pressure and reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. IFIC attitudinal research in 2009 and 2011 also revealed that consumers had a low level of awareness and concern about sodium intake.

The article, Blood Pressure Management: Communicating Comprehensive Lifestyle Strategies Beyond Sodium, presents a summary of the Roundtable discussion and selected results from the 2011 IFIC consumer research on concerns, perceptions, and actions taken toward sodium.

According to lead author, Kathryn M. Kolasa, PhD, RD, LDN, professor emeritus, Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University, “Almost one in three adults in America suffers from hypertension, so finding ways to reduce blood pressure is an important public health goal. While reducing sodium is an important factor in managing high blood pressure, for some individuals, it isn’t the only factor that should be considered.”

“Our consumer research indicates that sodium reduction isn’t always the lifestyle change that consumers feel they can be most successful in achieving initially,” said article co-author Marianne Smith Edge, MS, RD, FADA, IFIC senior vice president for nutrition and food safety. “That’s why it is so critical to communicate more comprehensively about all factors known to positively affect blood pressure to give consumers the best opportunity for long term success.”

In addition to Kolasa and Smith Edge, authors of the article include: Kris Sollid, RD, IFIC associate director of nutrients; and Ann Bouchoux, MSW, IFIC senior director of nutrients communication.

For interview requests and any other questions, please contact the IFIC Foundation media team at 202-296-8540, Cohen@ific.org or Matthews@ific.org.

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