

# Food Skills For Families Program Canadian Diabetes Association

## Phase Three Evaluation Report

September 22, 2009

# Food Skills for Families Program Canadian Diabetes Association

## Phase Three Evaluation Report September 2009

### Executive Summary

The Food Skills for Families program is one of five Healthy Eating Strategy Initiatives, which in turn is one of four strategies supported by the BC Healthy Living Alliance<sup>1</sup> and funded by ActNow BC.

The following presents the key outcomes based on the analysis of the pre and post matched questionnaires completed by Phase Three participants in the Food Skills for Families Program (April – June, 2009).<sup>2</sup> Results from the matched (265) and the unmatched sample (378 post questionnaires) are essentially the same. Results from the follow up focus groups are also included.

Phase Three respondents in the post evaluation group compared to the pre evaluation group:

- Report that they are eating more fruits and vegetables every day as a result of taking this course, meeting the 5-7 servings per day criteria of the Canada Food Guide.
- Have a significantly higher level of knowledge about healthy foods.
- Are cooking more meals from “scratch” that includes raw or fresh ingredients (not using convenience or packaged meals).
- Have a significantly higher level of confidence about preparing and cooking new foods, basic food safety procedures and reading nutrition facts on food labels.

*Note:* These results are consistent with the results from the Phase One and Two evaluations.

In Phase Three, respondents were asked how often they consumed sugar sweetened beverages, ate fried food and added salt to their food. Little difference was seen at the overall group level between the pre and post responses. In some cases, as with fried foods, participants start in a healthy range hence there is little capacity for improvement. For example, 70% identified they had fried foods once per week or less in the pre questionnaire.

---

<sup>1</sup> BC Healthy Living Alliance is a group of not-for-profit organizations working collaboratively to support British Columbians to eat healthier, get active and live tobacco free.

<sup>2</sup> The key findings from the evaluation of Phase One programs (October – December 2008) were presented in March 2009<sup>2</sup> and the finding from the evaluation of Phase Two (January – April, 2009) was presented in June 2009.

In other cases, differences are only apparent within or between sub-groups (age and/or gender). For sugar sweetened beverages, the 35-54 and 55+ age categories started within an acceptable range, but the younger participants (under age 35) did not and would benefit from reducing their intake.

On average, respondents reported adding salt to their food less than once a day in the post questionnaire. Both males and female participants decreased their salt intake by one category but started at different levels of intake. The 35-54 year old age group significantly reduced their salt use.

Overall, 87% of respondents indicated that they intend to increase the amount of fruit and vegetables they eat in the next 6-12 months.

Respondents in Phase Three reported that the "biggest changes" they made as a result of taking the program were to:

- eat more fruits and vegetables
- use less fat, sugar and salt
- use 1% or skim milk
- eat more whole grains
- have increased knowledge about healthy foods
- have increased confidence in cooking skills, ability to read nutrition fact labels, and trying new healthy recipes.

*Note:* The 'biggest changes' reported by Phase Three participants are consistent with those reported by participants in Phases One and Two.

In terms of barriers to healthy eating, having healthy recipes, knowing which methods of cooking are healthy and knowing which foods are healthy were all significantly reduced as reported barriers in the post questionnaire. What increased as a significant barrier in the post questionnaire was: *healthy foods cost too much money*. Food security is a critical issue for healthy eating.

The discussion at the follow up focus groups with Punjabi, New Immigrant and Aboriginal participants demonstrates that key changes continue to be 'top of mind' 2-6 months after completion of the sessions. Most significantly, participants said:

- *They are eating more fruits and vegetables.*
- *They are using less oil, sugar and salt.*
- *Their confidence level to prepare and choose healthier foods has continued.*
- *They enjoy preparing healthy food for their families and seeing their children join in the preparation.*
- *They enjoy the new 'Canadian' recipes.*
- *The Punjabi and Aboriginal participants appreciate knowing how to make traditional recipes healthier.*