

PRESS RELEASE

MORE SINGAPOREANS OPTING FOR WHOLEGRAIN FOODS

HPB's partnership with industry and education on importance of wholegrain drives preference for healthier choices

Singapore, 7 February 2013: The Health Promotion Board's research has revealed positive trends in consumption of wholegrain and selected nutrients among Singaporeans. The research is part of HPB's ongoing surveillance of the Singaporean diet and is a key barometer of how eating habits have evolved over time.

2. With HPB's efforts to increase the availability of wholegrain options at key touch points, Singaporeans are now choosing to eat more unrefined carbohydrates from wholegrain foods such as wholemeal bread, oats and brown rice. According to the research, the proportion of Singaporeans reporting that they eat at least one serving of wholegrain foods a day has increased from 8.4 per cent in 2004 to 27.0 per cent in 2010, as compared to the amount of refined carbohydrate staples in the diet, such as white rice, noodles and white bread, which has decreased by 11 per cent between 2004 and 2010. This is a positive trend as increased wholegrain intake is associated with a reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes¹.

3. Through targeted initiatives such as the Healthier Hawker Centre and FINEST Food programmes, HPB has worked on making wholegrain options readily available. New products like wholemeal *mee kia* and wholemeal *mee pok* are now easily available to hawkers so traditional dishes are now healthier without compromising on taste. More people are also buying wholegrain products. In 2009, wholegrain bread and rice constituted nine per cent of all rice and bread sales. There has since been a two - fold increase in wholegrain bread and rice sales, accounting for 20 per cent for all rice and bread sales in 2012.

¹ Liu S *et al.* 2000. A prospective study of whole-grain intake and risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus in US women. *Am J Public Health* 90 :1409 – 1415.

4. Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Officer, HPB said, “Rather than fight social trends, HPB’s strategy is to drive holistic and multidisciplinary efforts to nudge the population towards healthier choices through sustained programmes such as the ‘Healthier Hawker Centre’ programme within communities, coupled with making wholegrain bread and rice readily available at key touch points. As Singaporeans eat out more, we want to make sure that affordable and healthier versions of their favourite dishes are available. This means working across the entire value chain, from the development of healthier ingredients, to the distribution and supply of these ingredients, to the front-end food preparation by our food vendors to serve healthy and tasty dishes. The research findings suggest that the recent national public health efforts in promoting wholegrain intake have had positive effects, which support this strategy and encourages us to continue nudging consumers towards healthier eating habits.”

5. Other research findings included an increase in the proportion of Singaporeans using unsaturated oils in home cooking, and a decrease in the proportion using oils with high saturated fat content. Unsaturated oils are more ‘heart healthy’ in comparison with saturated fat equivalents, and in 2010 six in ten (59.0 per cent) people reported usually using unsaturated oils, an increase of nine percentage points since 2004. Research also indicates that healthier cooking oils remain a popular choice, with Healthier Choice cooking oils accounting for around 60 per cent of all oil sales in 2012, increasing from 40 per cent of all oil sales in 2009.

6. However, while wholegrain consumption and healthier oil may be up, more Singaporeans are consuming refined sugar in the form of sugar-sweetened beverages. Research has shown that over the six years, the number of Singaporeans taking sweetened beverages has increased by 13 percentage points. Almost a third of young adults aged 18 to 29 years (29.3 per cent) consumed on average, one sweetened beverage every day.

7. HPB is working with the industry to reduce sugar content of beverages and rolling out campaigns to cater this trend. For example, HPB has launched Singapore’s first Let’s Drink Water Campaign in an effort to urge school-going children and youths to inculcate the habit of replacing sweetened beverages with water. In addition, HPB has been working with the industry to reduce the sugar content of popular beverages through our Healthier Choice Symbol Programme. Since 2009, there has been a significant increase in the number of reduced-sugar drinks bearing Healthier Choice Symbol (HCS), from 19 beverages to 351

beverages in 2012. One industry leader that HPB has been working with is F&N. Over the last decade, the sugar content of F&N's portfolio of drinks has been reduced by 15 per cent.

8. The research findings have also shown that fewer Singaporeans now have inadequate intakes of key vitamins and minerals, such as calcium, iron and vitamin A. Concurrently, there are now more Singaporeans consuming excessive calories. Six in ten Singaporeans consume excessive quantities of energy, while seven in ten consume excessive quantities of saturated fat. Key sources of saturated fat include oil used for stir-frying, coconut milk based dishes, and snacks such as biscuits, pastries, cakes, and titbits.

9. Henceforth, all new applicants and those renewing the Healthier Choice license agreement are required to carry the front-of-pack Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) labelling. GDAs are guidelines on how much energy and nutrients are required for a healthy, balanced diet. The GDA label on a food product details the amount and percentage GDA of calories and nutrients contained per serving of the product.

10. Response from HPB's industry engagement has been positive. Major drinks manufacturers such as F&N and Pokka have committed to including GDAs on the labels of their beverages while major supermarket chains such as Cold Storage, NTUC FairPrice, Shop & Save, and Giant will incorporate GDA labelling on several categories of their house brand products within this year.

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| Annex 1 | Highlights from the 2010 National Nutrition Survey |
| Annex 2 | Example of Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) labelling |

Issued by Health Promotion Board

Annex 1 – Highlights from the 2010 National Nutrition Survey

Figure 1: Comparison of types of oil used for cooking at home, 2004 and 2010

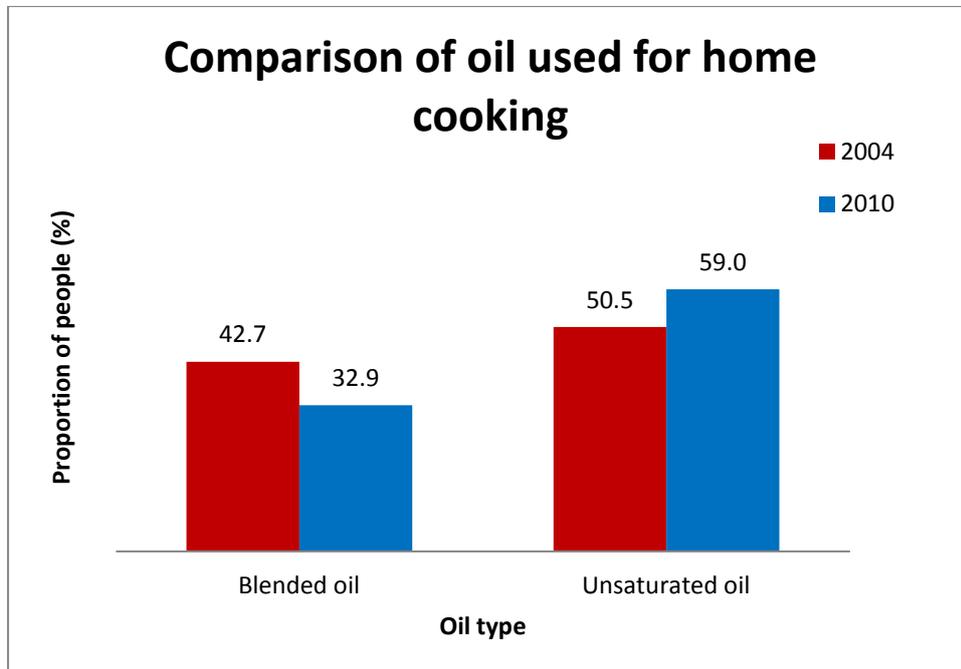


Figure 2: Comparison of frequency of sweetened beverage consumption, 2004 and 2010

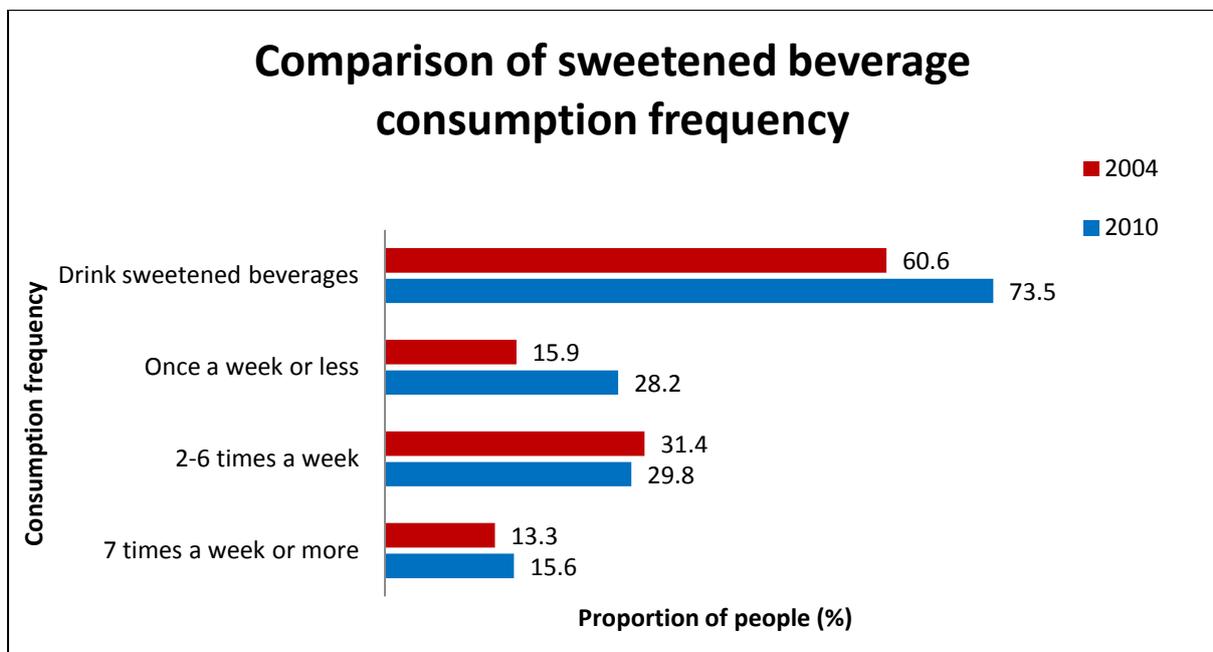


Figure 3: Comparison of dietary insufficiencies of selected nutrients, 2004 and 2010

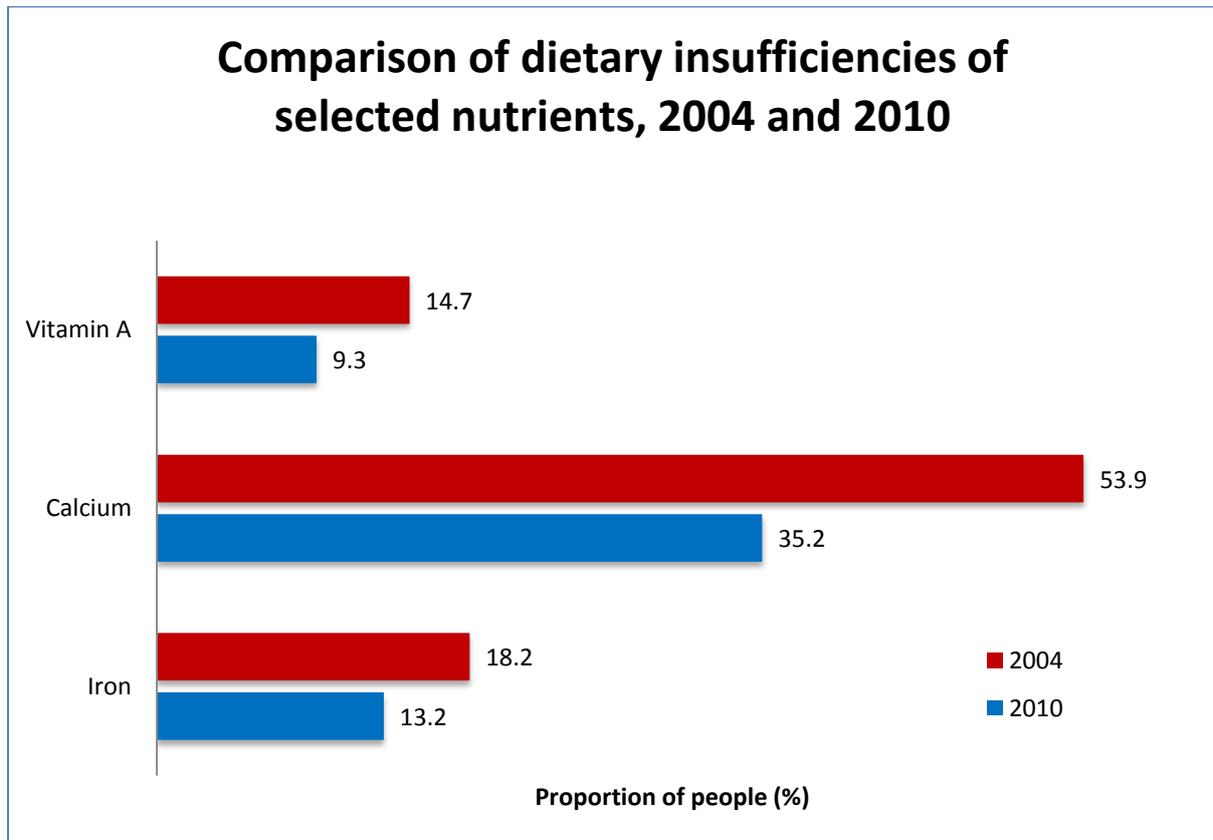
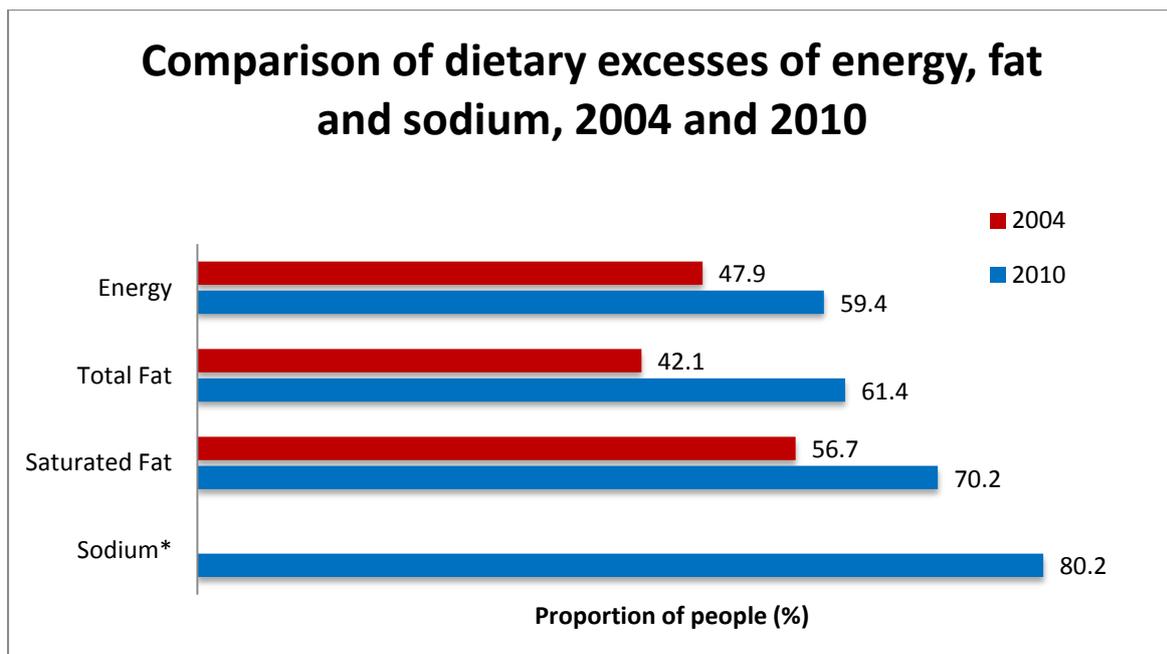


Figure 4: Comparison of dietary excesses of energy and fat, 2004 and 2010



Note: No 2004 data is available on sodium intake.

Table 1: Major sources of saturated fat in the diet of adult Singapore residents, 2010

| Food items | Percent (%) contribution to saturated fat intake |
|---|--|
| Rice, noodles, meat dishes and desserts containing coconut milk/cream | 16.3 |
| Biscuits, pastries, cakes, nuts, tidbits, snacks, local snacks** | 14.4 |
| Stir fried vegetables* | 9.0 |
| Fried noodles | 6.1 |
| Coffee, tea and malt beverages containing milk*** | 5.6 |

* Plain or with meat/seafood/oyster sauce or sambal

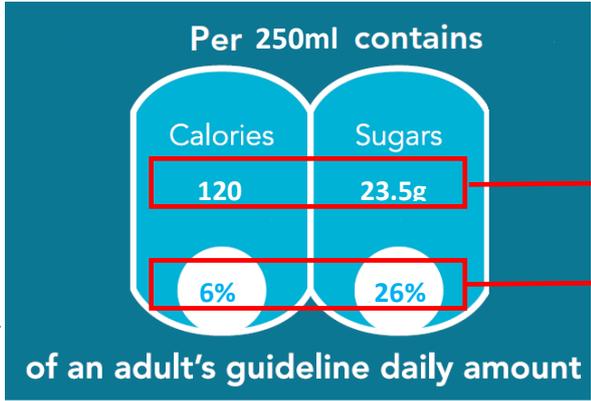
** Crackers, puff pastries, nuts, salty snacks, chocolates, etc

*** Includes full-cream, low fat, skim milk and milk powder, condensed/ evaporated milk, creamer/ whitener

Annex 2 Example of Guideline Daily Amount (GDA) labelling



Top half indicates amount of nutrients in one serving of product



Bottom half indicates how much a serving of food contributes to the GDAs