

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until: 00.01am, 10 November 2008

COMPELLING EVIDENCE SHOWS BABY BOOMERS IN DIRE NEED OF MORE OMEGA-3S

Heart Foundation Launches 'Tools' To Help Consumers Meet Target Intake

A new report launched today by The Omega-3 Centre highlights the need for *Baby Boomers* to eat more fish and other foods rich in long chain omega-3s to help fight chronic disease, improve overall health and reduce the financial cost to the Australian healthcare system.

The report is the first of its kind to clearly recommend an increase in omega-3s consumption by *Baby Boomers*. It reinforces Heart Foundation recommendations and new tools such as eating plans, recipes and lists of omega-3 content of foods which aim to make it easier for all Australians to consume more omega-3s.

Most of Australia's 4.8 million *Baby Boomers*, those born from 1946 to 1965, are not consuming enough long chain omega-3s to help ward off chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, obesity, age-related macular degeneration and arthritis. In fact, Australian adults' median intake of long chain omega-3s is **less than a quarter** of the 500mg per day recommended by the Heart Foundation.

With the number of people aged over 65 years projected to rise from 2.9 million in 2011 to more than 5 million by 2031, improving the overall health of *Baby Boomers* and reducing the cost to Australia's healthcare system is a priority for the nutrition and medical experts who participated in the first roundtable omega-3 consensus workshop for *Baby Boomers* hosted by the CSIRO's Food Futures Flagship in July this year.

The "**Scientific Consensus Report: Omega-3 Fatty Acids for Baby Boomers**" is a result of their work and for the first time addresses the omega-3 needs of *Baby Boomers*. It is being presented at The Omega-3 Centre Symposium at Harbour's Edge, Darling Harbour, Sydney today.

Ms Wendy Morgan, Registered Nutritionist and Nutrition Advisor to The Omega-3 Centre, said that omega-3s are an essential polyunsaturated fat. Our bodies can only convert very small amounts of the shorter chain omega-3s to the more effective long chain omega-3s, EPA and DHA, so most needs to come from our diet.

"Long chain omega-3s are essential nutrients for a number of health functions, and the report shows they have wide-ranging roles in the body. They have a significant role to play in brain and heart health and in reducing inflammation. There is also an emerging body of evidence in the role they play in cognition and mental health," Ms Morgan added.

Ms Barbara Eden, Nutrition Policy Manager, Heart Foundation said that by making a few small changes we can boost levels of these important oils.

"The desired levels of omega-3s can be easily achieved by consuming two to three serves of oily fish every week, supplementing with fish oil supplements and omega-3 enriched food and drinks if needed."

The report shows that by consuming the recommended daily intake of omega-3s, *Baby Boomers* were significantly advantaged in combating a variety of chronic conditions including cardiovascular disease, lowering triglycerides, age-related macular degeneration, rheumatoid arthritis, and some metabolic conditions including weight management.

Professor Philip Calder, an expert on inflammation is the international guest speaker at the Omega-3 Centre symposium. Prof. Calder states "anti-inflammatory actions of long chain omega-3s suggests they could be useful to protect against and to treat inflammatory conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis. Anti-inflammatory actions may also contribute to the widely recognised protective effect of long chain omega-3 fatty acids towards cardiovascular disease and may also contribute to a reduction in occurrence and severity of cardiovascular events."

There is also evidence to support omega-3s helping in mood and cognition including reducing the risk of depression and Alzheimer's disease. "This is probably due to the fundamental roles that omega-3s play in the development, functioning and maintenance of the brain," Ms Morgan explained.

Although Australia and New Zealand lead the world in having clear recommended intakes for omega-3s, both government agencies and health care professionals can play an important role in promoting increased intakes of long chain omega-3s by *Baby Boomers*.

"We need more activities and programs aimed at increasing awareness and understanding of the benefits of consuming omega-3s and addressing barriers to increased consumption, including dietary preferences and accessible sources," Ms Morgan added.

"After reviewing all the evidence, the Heart Foundation is promoting the importance of omega-3s for cardiovascular health and showing Australians how easy it is to include more omega-3s into daily meals with a range of tips and tools ," said Ms Eden.

Visit the Heart Foundation website for more information and tools to help Baby Boomers and their families achieve omega-3 dietary targets. Go to www.heartfoundation.org.au

A summary of the Consensus Meeting outcomes and further information regarding the benefits of omega-3s is available on The Omega-3 Centre Website: www.omega-3centre.com

Omega-3 consumption targets for *Baby Boomers* wanting therapeutic benefit:

- Around 3000 mg EPA and DHA /day are recommended for assistance with pain relief in rheumatoid arthritis.
- At least 1000 mg EPA and DHA /day are recommended for existing cardiovascular disease.
- 1200 – 4000 mg EPA + DHA (or DHA alone) has been shown to be effective for treatment of high blood triglycerides.

Consult your doctor or dietitian on how to achieve these levels of consumption.

Note:

The "*Scientific Consensus Report: Omega-3 Fatty Acids for Baby Boomers*" is based on deliberations held on 10 July 2008, CSIRO Food Futures National Research Flagship Sydney, NSW, by nutrition and medical experts from Deakin University, Westmead Hospital, University of South Australia, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Wesley Medical Centre, University of Tasmania, The Omega-3 Centre and the University of Wollongong.

The publication of the Report was supported by The Omega-3 Centre, Nu-Mega Ingredients, New Zealand King Salmon and Martek Biosciences Corporation.

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Available for interview.

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