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Survey Shows Americans Understand Heart Health Yet Fail to Act on Knowledge
Expert sheds light on heart health and offers easy, everyday tips

LAKELAND, Fla., January 19, 2010 – A new survey of American adults revealed that while most feel knowledgeable when it comes to heart health, many do not put their knowledge into practice.¹ In fact, 81 percent of respondents reported feeling well-informed about ways to maintain heart health and almost nine out of 10 knew they could help reduce the risk of heart disease by exercising and maintaining a healthy diet. Despite this understanding, they failed to make the best food choices or exercise enough, and more than half had already been diagnosed with heart disease or reported having one or more at-risk conditions, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure or diabetes.

A recent survey, from the Florida Department of Citrus, showed that fewer than half of respondents chose heart healthy options when dining out or shopping for groceries, fewer than one in three often substituted heart healthy options when cooking and only 37 percent often stocked their pantries with heart healthy foods. Time pressures and perceived expense were among the most common reasons why adults surveyed felt challenged to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

“A lot of people think being heart healthy requires a whole lifestyle overhaul, which may be a key deterrent, particularly for adults who are set in their ways,” said Dr. Richard Collins, The Cooking Cardiologist and director of wellness at South Denver Cardiology Associates. “There are many easy steps you can take to help improve heart health – from substituting ingredients in recipes to choosing the right beverages and making the most of the activities you already enjoy. Many heart healthy steps can be relatively quick and easy to incorporate and don’t have to break your budget.”

Dr. Collins offers these easy-to-follow heart healthy tips:

1. Exercise contributes to an overall healthy lifestyle, but be careful to avoid rebound hunger following your workout. If you maintain a moderate level of daily exercise, you burn roughly anywhere from 13 to 18 calories per pound of body weight a day and should only consume that amount of calories to maintain your current weight.
2. When reading nutrition labels, look for foods that are rich in vitamin C. Vitamin C can support heart health by helping to neutralize free radicals that can cause cell and tissue damage – damage that may contribute to the development of chronic health issues like heart disease and cancer. Many fruits and vegetables, such as 100 percent orange juice, are excellent sources of vitamin C.
3. Not all fats are bad. While you should avoid saturated fats and trans fats, omega-3 fats may help reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke. Omega-3 fats are found in foods such as walnuts, flaxseed and fatty fish, such as salmon or tuna.

¹ The survey was based on a nationally representative sample of 1,004 U.S. adults age 35 or older. Interviews were conducted online during a six-day period starting August 21, 2009 by Richard Day Research for the Florida Department of Citrus. The margin of error for a random sample of this size is +/-3 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.

Since many of the risk factors for heart disease may be impacted by diet, Collins says supporting heart health may be as simple as learning which foods are heart healthy and how to incorporate them into regular meals. For example, the orange juice that starts many Americans' mornings provides nutrients such as potassium, which may help maintain healthy blood pressure and promote heart health. Additionally, an observational study found that drinking one serving of citrus juice a day was associated with a 25 percent reduced risk of stroke.² Orange juice can go beyond the breakfast table. One cup added to your favorite salad dressing, smoothie or marinade is an easy and delicious way to incorporate the beverage's nutrients into your meals.

For more information, visit www.FloridaJuice.com.

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The Florida Department of Citrus is an executive agency of Florida government charged with the marketing, research and regulation of the Florida citrus industry. Its activities are funded by a tax paid by growers on each box of citrus that moves through commercial channels. The industry employs nearly 76,000 people, provides an annual economic impact close to \$9 billion to the state, and contributes hundreds of millions of dollars in tax revenues that help support Florida's schools, roads and health care services. For more information about the Florida Department of Citrus, please visit www.floridajuice.com.

² Joshipura KJ, et al. Fruit and vegetable intake in relation to risk of ischemic stroke. JAMA. 1999;282:1233-1239.