

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

28th July 2008



## **Cambridge women falling short of recommended Iron intake.**

**Women living in East Anglia are consuming less than two thirds (64%) of the recommended daily intake of iron** according to the UK National Diet and Nutrition Survey of adults aged 19 to 64 years, resulting in them being at risk of developing iron deficiency. Researchers at the **MRC Human Nutrition Research in Cambridge** are investigating the absorption of a novel iron preparation in an attempt to help develop new treatments.

Patients with iron deficiency anaemia are a major problem for health professionals and this is the most prevalent nutritional problem in the world, with 700 million people being affected. It has serious impacts on the health of individuals and financially to business through lost work hours and reduced work performance.

Iron deficiency occurs when the body is unable to absorb enough iron to meet the body's requirements. This could be due to inadequate iron intakes in the diet, the iron source having reduced availability to the body or because of an increased demand for iron by the body. When this occurs over a prolonged period of time, iron deficiency anaemia can result.

Technically iron deficiency is treated by simply increasing the intake of iron through diet or via supplementation. However practically this is not so easily done. Dietary iron absorption is influenced by a number of factors such as the amount eaten, the form of iron and what else is consumed during the same meal, as some foods enhance and some inhibit iron absorption. Many GPs resort to prescribing iron supplements but many people stop taking the tablets because of unpleasant side effects such as nausea, vomiting and bowel disturbances.

However, an answer to this problem maybe in sight. Dr. Jonathan Powell, Head of Micronutrient Status Research at MRC Human Nutrition Research in Cambridge explained. "It is apparent that there are functional effects of iron deficiency and adverse consequences on quality of life in populations around the world. Our research is currently investigating the

influence of the chemical form of iron used in oral supplement on iron absorption, in order to maximise the benefits and minimise the potential for side effects in the treatment of iron deficiency”.

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Notes to Editor:

- Anaemia results in reduced ability to transport oxygen around the body and can therefore in the extremes can have an adverse affect on cardiovascular, respiratory and muscular function.
- More common symptoms of iron-deficiency anaemia include headaches, always feeling cold, light-headedness and dizziness, painful cracks to the side of the mouth and a sore tongue. It can affect people’s moods making them irritable and can leave sufferers with poor concentration and energy levels.
- We are currently looking for volunteers for this study. If you are interested please contact [carol.hutchinson@mrc-hnr.cam.ac.uk](mailto:carol.hutchinson@mrc-hnr.cam.ac.uk) (Tel: 01223 437536) or [zoe.tolkien@mrc-hnr.cam.ac.uk](mailto:zoe.tolkien@mrc-hnr.cam.ac.uk)
- For further information about iron deficiency, the study at Cambridge or to arrange an interview with a nutrition scientist at HNR please contact: Claire Mac Evilly or Glenys Jones, MRC Human Nutrition Research on 01223 426 356