



NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA, AUSTRALIA

Media Release

Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

Monday, 19 February 2018

Bread helps sustain iodine levels in Tasmania

The continued use of iodised salt in bread has produced positive results with the latest research showing the Tasmanian population now has an acceptable level of iodine nutrition.

The findings of the latest Iodine Survey of Tasmanian School Children published in [The Medical Journal of Australia](#) today (**Monday, 19 February**), show iodine nutrition to be within the adequate range recommended by the World Health Organisation, the United Nations Children's Fund and the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders.

The survey was conducted by the University of Tasmania's Menzies Institute for Medical Research and funded by the Tasmanian Government through the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Iodine is an essential nutrient needed in very small amounts for the normal development of the brain and nervous system and comes from sources including dairy milk, bread baked with iodised salt and seafood.

Iodine deficiency is linked to a range of adverse health and developmental outcomes, with recent research by the Menzies Institute showing a link between mild iodine deficiency in Tasmania during pregnancy and poor educational outcomes for children and adolescents.

In 2001, after a long history of iodine deficiency, Tasmania became the first state in Australia to work towards improving iodine levels.

Mandatory fortification of bread with iodine was introduced nationally in 2009.

Lead researcher from the Menzies Institute, Dr Kristen Hynes, said the results were pleasing.

“Mandatory bread fortification has resulted in consistent levels in school children for seven years and indicates that iodine nutrition across the general population is also adequate.”

However, Dr Hynes warned that the findings could not be generalised to include pregnant and breast-feeding women, or women planning pregnancy, as their iodine requirements were much higher.

“To ensure an adequate supply of iodine for the growing foetus and infant, these groups of women should follow the 2010 National Health and Medical Research Council recommendation to take a daily supplement of 150 micrograms of iodine, in addition to healthy eating,” she said.

In 2016, 413 Tasmanian school children aged 8-10 years participated in the latest survey. It was conducted as part of a five-yearly monitoring program, introduced in 2011 by the DHHS, to ensure ongoing iodine sufficiency in the Tasmanian population.

Acting Director of Public Health Dr Scott McKeown said the results showed the important role Tasmania had played in addressing iodine inadequacies.

“The results indicate that fortification of bread with iodised salt, a public health initiative first introduced in Tasmania, continues to have a positive impact on iodine nutrition status of the general Tasmanian population,” he said.

The next survey will be conducted in 2021.

The survey findings can be found in The Medical Journal of Australia:
<https://www.mja.com.au/journal/2018/208/03>

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