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## **Groundbreaking Study Shows Western Diet Increases Risk of Heart Diseases**

**Singapore (October 29, 2008)** – Agency France Press in a 21 October article reported the results of a study conducted by a team of researchers at McMaster University in Canada on 16,000 heart attack patients between 1999 and 2003 in countries on every continent.

The INTERHEART study was an international, case-control study of over 16,000 patients with first MI (myocardial infarction) compared with a similar number of patients without MI, matched on gender and age. Patients were evaluated in 52 countries worldwide including Singapore. This marked a shift from previous studies which focused only on the developed world.

Evaluation included a questionnaire on demographics, lifestyle, health history, psychosocial factors and medications; physical assessment of blood pressure, heart rate, height, weight, and waist and hip circumference; and non fasting blood samples for measurement of lipid profiles.

The results that were first published on 20 October 2008 in *Circulation*, the journal of the American Heart Association, categorised the risk levels of three groups of patients based on their dietary patterns.

The article quoted Prof Salim Yusuf, professor of medicine at McMaster University and the senior author of the study, as saying that heart disease is now increasingly striking people in developing countries. Eighty percent of heart disease today is in low- to middle-income countries partly because more people around the world are adopting a Western diet.



Researchers found that people who eat a diet high in fried foods, salty snacks, eggs and meat – the “Western Diet” – had a 35 percent greater risk of having heart attacks than people who consumed little or no fried foods or meat, regardless of where they live.

The study also showed that people who eat a “Prudent Diet” – high in leafy green vegetables, other raw and cooked vegetables and fruits – had a 30 percent lower risk of heart attack than those who eat little or no fruit or vegetables.

The third dietary pattern, called the “Oriental Diet” because it contained foods such as tofu and soy sauce that are typically consumed in Asian societies, was found to have little impact on the risk of heart attack.

Dr Low Lip Ping, Chairman Emeritus of the Singapore Heart Foundation, commented: “The results of this study are of course expected and support what has been widely believed and recommended regarding the adoption of a heart healthy diet. The study, however, now provides the scientific evidence for this belief.”

Dr Low said: “The study found that the ‘Western’ diet increases the risk of heart attacks and that this applies across the world. The ‘Prudent’ diet carried the lowest risk. The ‘Oriental’ diet seemed to be protective against heart attack in some regions of the world, but was not the best overall, perhaps because of the high salt content of soy and other sauces common in the dining choices.”

He added: “The study does acknowledge that serving sizes and preparation technique, like including the type of fat used in cooking, could play a role in increasing heart attack risk in participants adhering to a Western diet.” He also noted that eating a healthy diet of fruits and vegetables can actually reduce one’s risk of a heart attack by at least 30 percent.

Dr Terrance Chua, Chairman, Singapore Heart Foundation, agreed, saying: “The study confirms and reinforces the importance of a healthy diet in preventing coronary heart disease. This is a message that the Singapore Heart Foundation together with government health agencies such as the Ministry of Health and the Health Promotion Board have been emphasising for many years.”

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**About Singapore Heart Foundation**



The Singapore Heart Foundation (SHF) is a non-profit charitable organisation committed to promoting heart health in Singapore, as well as preventing and reducing disability and death due to cardiovascular diseases and stroke.

Established in 1970, SHF fulfils its mission through educational programmes highlighting preventive measures against heart disease to the public. The Foundation funds community-based research to better understand the landscape of heart disease in Singapore. SHF also focuses on rehabilitative care in its *SHF-Isetan Foundation Heart Wellness* centre for recovering heart patients. In addition, SHF offers financial assistance to needy heart patients for emergency relief as well as for treatment. For more information, please visit [www.myheart.org.sg](http://www.myheart.org.sg).