

## Canadians should pay more attention to their gut feelings

*May 29th is World Digestive Health Day*

**Toronto, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2008** – The topic of digestive health rarely makes it into everyday conversation, yet millions of Canadians experience gastrointestinal symptoms on a daily basis. From embarrassment and discomfort to fatigue, decreased quality of life and reduced productivity, digestive disorders can have far-reaching health and economic impacts. May 29<sup>th</sup> is World Digestive Health Day, an opportunity for Canadians to learn how to make healthy food choices in order to maintain a healthy digestive system.

### **The importance of nutrition in good digestive health**

The theme for this year's World Digestive Health Day is "Optimal Health and Nutrition", which highlights the importance of nutrition as an integral part of healthy digestion.

"Gastrointestinal problems can result from a number of factors, including diet and lifestyle", says well-known dietitian Rosie Schwartz. "The good news is that Canadians can do many things to help prevent digestive disorders and even improve their digestion, such as eating smaller, more frequent meals, chewing their food slowly and properly, eating high fiber foods and foods containing probiotics such as yogurt." World Digestive Health Day is a perfect opportunity to pay more attention to digestive health and learn how to use food to maintain and improve digestion and overall well-being.

### **World Digestive Health Day**

Spearheaded every year by the World Gastroenterology Organization (WGO), World Digestive Health Day (WDHD) aims to raise awareness around digestive health and provide a forum for the millions of Canadians that suffer from digestive problems. Symptoms range from constipation, heartburn, bloating and diarrhea to disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome and reflux to deadly diseases such as colon cancer.

In Canada, CROP study conducted in April 2008 among women aged 18 to 70 showed that 50% of them suffer from digestive problems once a week, frequently leading to feelings of discomfort and fatigue. The majority of the women interviewed attributed their digestive upsets to stress and nutrition and 60% say these symptoms make them feel "uncomfortable".

The Canadian Digestive Health Foundation reports that those with gastrointestinal symptoms miss nine times as many days of work as those without symptoms. More than 30% of the worldwide population is affected by heartburn at least once a month. According to the WGO, digestive disorders can make people feel embarrassed and uncomfortable, decrease their energy level and lead them to limit or avoid social activities.

Digestive issues also have an enormous economic impact. The Canadian Digestive Health Foundation declares that in Canada, digestive disorders cost the health care system more than any other disease category. They represent 12% of all hospitalizations and about \$8 billion of the total direct economic burden of all health costs. About 18 million days of work are lost every year due to the affliction. Diarrhea alone accounts for approximately 150,000 sick days, resulting in an annual cost of \$22 million.

As part of WDHD, the WGO is publishing 10 global nutritional recommendations to help consumers make better choices for their digestive health. The recommendations include exercising regularly, increasing intake of fish, maintaining a healthy body mass index, choosing lean meats and consuming fermented dairy products, especially probiotics with proven benefits on digestive health.

As one of the world leaders in healthy food and one of few manufacturers committed to research and development, Danone has been studying probiotic bacteria — bacterial strains with health benefits — for over 20 years and understands its true benefits. Danone's Activia yogurt, which contains the probiotic strain B.L. Regularis™, is the product of the company's extensive research into digestive health. Activia has been involved in more than 35 clinical trials and has been proven by nine scientific studies on the digestive system to have beneficial properties, including improved digestive comfort, reduced bloating and increased intestinal transit.

### **About the World Gastroenterology Organization**

The WGO is a federation of 103 national societies and four regional associations of gastroenterology throughout the world, representing more than 50 000 gastroenterologists. The WGO believes nutrition is integral to digestive health and that daily use of proven probiotics can be important for digestive health.

### **About Danone Group**

In Canada, Danone Inc. is a member of Groupe Danone, a worldwide leader in healthy food. Its mission is to bring health through tasty, nutritious and affordable food and beverage products to as many people as possible. Fulfilling this mission is a major contributor to the Groupe's continuous fast growth. Groupe Danone enjoys leading positions on healthy food on four businesses: fresh dairy products (n°1 worldwide), waters (n° 2 on the packaged water market), baby nutrition (n°2 worldwide) and medical nutrition.

### **About the WGO-Danone partnership**

Danone has joined the WGO in a three-year partnership to raise awareness among consumers and health professionals of the importance of maintaining digestive health, as well as collate scientific information on the impact of nutrition on digestive health. Danone is joining the WGO in launching this year's World Digestive Health Day on May 29<sup>th</sup>.