



Media Contact:
Cate MacGregor
617-939-8438
cmacgregor@coneinc.com

New Research on Health Benefits of Substituting Water for Sugar-Sweetened Beverages
Experts Convene to Discuss the Important Role Water Plays in Decreasing Diabetic and Cardiometabolic Risk

BOZEMAN, Mont. (September 15, 2011) – Today, leading researchers and health experts will present groundbreaking findings and applications on the importance of healthful hydration at the [Sustaining the Blue Planet: Global Water Education Conference](#). During the Healthy Hydration Symposium, experts will share new research and insights on abdominal obesity and decreasing diabetic and cardiometabolic risk, as well as the beneficial role that water could play in reducing risk factors.

These findings are particularly relevant as the number of people suffering from type 2 diabetes, the most common form of diabetes, is skyrocketing. Nearly 26 million Americans – or 8.3 percent of the population¹ – have the disease, 79 million more are pre-diabetic, and by 2030, the prevalence of diabetes is expected to increase by 120 percent worldwide.² Additionally, with fifty percent of Americans projected to be obese by 2030³ and nearly all countries seeing rates rise,⁴ obesity has also reached epidemic proportions.

“Abdominal obesity is a powerful risk factor for the development of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases,” said Dr. Jean-Pierre Després, PhD, Université Laval, Québec, Canada, and Scientific Director of the [International Chair on Cardiometabolic Risk \(ICCR\)](#), the host of today’s Symposium. “The epidemic prevalence achieved by abdominal obesity can be explained by our sedentary lifestyle and poor nutritional habits, among which an overconsumption of sugar-sweetened beverages plays a significant role. Until recently, these beverages have escaped the scrutiny that low-quality foods have received, but as our research shows, this certainly should not be the case.”

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2011 National Diabetes Fact Sheet. Jan. 26, 2011. http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/pubs/pdf/ndfs_2011.pdf.

² ICCR, adapted from Hossain P. et al. *New England Journal of Medicine*. 2007; 356: 213-5.

³ *The Lancet*, Volume 378, Issue 9793, Pages 815 – 825. “Health and economic burden of the projected obesity trends in the USA and the UK Summary.” 27 August 2011.

⁴ WHO Collaborating Center for Obesity Prevention.

During today's session, Dr. Després will highlight abdominal obesity as a poorly recognized risk factor and discuss waist circumference as a simple vital sign to assess and follow changes in dangerous abdominal fat over time. Additionally, he will speak to over consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages as one important marker of a poor diet, which contributes to abdominal obesity, type 2 diabetes and associated cardiovascular complications. Dr. Després will close by discussing the importance of a healthful lifestyle and healthful nutritional and drinking habits, and will provide goals and metrics for achieving ideal cardiovascular health, which include eating fruits and vegetables, fish and fiber-rich whole grains and reducing the intake of sodium and sugar-sweetened beverages.

“There's convincing evidence that regular consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with increased risk of obesity and diabetes, and emerging evidence that these beverages increase the risk for heart disease,” said Frank B. Hu, MD, PhD, Harvard School of Public Health. “To reduce risk of obesity and cardiometabolic diseases, it is important to reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and replace them with healthful choices such as water and unsweetened tea or coffee.”

During the Symposium, Dr. Hu will speak to the strong epidemiological evidence of making the switch from sugar-sweetened beverages to water. He will also discuss the connections between beverage choices and weight gain risk and present data that demonstrate how substituting water for sugar-sweetened beverages would eliminate 1.5 pounds of weight gain during a 4-year follow-up and contribute to a 7 percent risk reduction of type 2 diabetes. These new findings are based on an analysis of tens of thousands of participants in a large cohort study.

Obesity and type 2 diabetes are also a growing issue for children, with 20 percent of children age 6-11 years suffering from obesity.⁵ Promoting healthful eating and drinking and active living among children is an important step for helping them develop healthful habits.

“We've had great success with a marketing campaign aimed at promoting water as the primary drink of choice and providing education around the amount of sugar in popular beverages,” said Heidi Kessler, Let's Go! School Nutrition Manager, The Kids CO-OP at Barbara Bush Children's Hospital at Maine Medical Center. “Behavior data shows that over two-thirds of parents in the greater Portland area report that their children are limiting sugar-sweetened beverages from their diets, and in turn, added more water and low-fat milk. This is good progress, which we'd like to see continue.”

Ms. Kessler will discuss “Let's Go!”, a multi-sector childhood obesity prevention program, and the importance of changing both policies and kids' environments to help them make healthful choices.

“We believe that educating children on hydration plays a significant role in obesity prevention initiatives worldwide,” said John Etgen, Senior Vice-President of the Project WET Foundation (Water Education for

⁵ Division of Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys. Prevalence of Obesity Among Children and Adolescents: United States, Trends 1963-1965 Through 2007-2008. June 2010.

Teachers) and co-chair of today's session. "We have benefited from the scientific support of the ICCR in developing a Project WET curriculum, specifically designed to raise awareness of the importance of balanced hydration and to encourage children to adopt healthy drinking habits at an early age." The curriculum will be publically released during the event and will be available for download on the Project WET website (www.projectwet.org) at no cost.

"Healthful hydration is one important element to fighting the epidemic of obesity in children," said Jean-Claude Coubard, Executive Director, ICCR. "The ICCR is excited to be bringing a human health-related component to the strong water education program for which Project WET's *Global Water Education Conference* is known."

In today's session, Mr. Coubard will highlight ICCR's commitment to enhancing awareness and knowledge of cardiometabolic risk factors in order to help the public understand the steps they can take to improve their health.

About the International Chair on Cardiometabolic Risk (ICCR)

The ICCR is an independent, academic, multidisciplinary organization affiliated with Université Laval and located at the Centre de recherche de l'Institut universitaire de cardiologie et de pneumologie de Québec in Québec City. It is composed of two councils: an Executive Council and a Scientific Council. The members of both councils have been chosen based on their expertise, their remarkable scientific contributions, and their status as world leaders in their discipline.

A key aspect of the Chair is its international and multidisciplinary character, with the following disciplines represented: cardiology, diabetology, lipidology, endocrinology and metabolism, obesity, nutrition, physical activity, and basic research.

The Chair's goal is to create a platform to examine new ideas, pool member experience and expertise, and share scientific and clinical data to benefit healthcare professionals around the world and the general public. The overarching purpose is to fight the abdominal obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease epidemic sweeping the world and to educate about the importance of physically active lifestyle associated with healthy eating and drinking habits.

More information on the ICCR can be found here:

<http://www.myhealthywaist.org/>
[facebook.com/myhealthywaist](https://www.facebook.com/myhealthywaist)
twitter.com/myhealthywaist
[youtube.com/myhealthywaist](https://www.youtube.com/myhealthywaist)
[slideshare.net/myhealthywaist](https://www.slideshare.net/myhealthywaist)
[linkedin.com/company/myhealthywaist.org](https://www.linkedin.com/company/myhealthywaist.org)
[flickr.com/photos/57142493@N03/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/57142493@N03/)