

## **Identification of a Probable Human Carcinogen N-Nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA) and Exposure Risk in Foods**

A resolution adopted at the 1992 OPHA Annual General Meeting

**Code:** 1992-05 (RES)      **Status:** Archived

**WHEREAS** there is a growing public health concern with the risk of chemical exposures and quality of our food supplies.

**WHEREAS** NDMA is a organic compound belonging to the family known as nitrosamines and NDMA is classified by the World Health Organization and by the U.S. environmental Protection Agency as a PROBABLE HUMAN CARCINOGEN.

**WHEREAS** there appear to be many potential sources and pathways of human exposure to NDMA via food, water, air, soil, and consumer products; however, the largest exposure source is through food.

**WHEREAS** NDMA is an inadvertent by-product of chemical processes in industry and forms during the preserving and curing of foods in food processing.

**WHEREAS** NDMA is presently in some foods such as certain cheeses, dried foods, smoked or salted fish, several alcoholic beverages including beer and especially nitrate-treated foods such as cured meats and can be formed endogenously in the human body from consumption of such foods.

**WHEREAS** food exposure to potential carcinogenic chemicals is of major public health significance. Public Health Professionals have an obligation to ensure the production of safe foods by advocating a reduction of NDMA levels in such foods, with an ultimate goal of virtual elimination of known or potential carcinogens from foods and food processing.

**WHEREAS** the Advisory Committee on Environmental Standards in May 1992 report to the Provincial Ministry of Environment of NDMA, recommended that Health and Welfare Canada undertake measures which will result in the reduction of NDMA levels in food.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT** OPHA urgently request the Federal Minister of National Health and Welfare to take measures to implement and develop a strategy which should include comprehensive testing programs, in conjunction with the food processing industry, in an effort to reduce levels of NDMA in such foods with the ultimate goal of virtual elimination of this substance from foods.

**FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED THAT** OPHA call upon the CPHA to assist in the advocacy of this issue because this problem is of national interest and chemicals in foods fall within federal responsibility.

---

**Regarding resolutions, position papers and motions:**

**Status:** Policy statements (resolutions, position papers and motions) are categorized as:

**ACTIVE**, if:

1. The activities outlined in the policy statement's implementation plan have not yet been completed; or
2. The policy statement addresses an issue that is currently relevant to public health in Ontario.

**ARCHIVED**, if:

1. The activities outlined in the policy statement's implementation plan have been completed; or
2. The policy statement addresses an issue that is not currently relevant to public health in Ontario or is not based upon the most current evidence. The statement remains the position of the OPHA until a new statement is adopted that effectively reverses or essentially negates all or major elements of an earlier statement. In this instance, the former supersedes the latter

**Reproduction:** This document is the property of the OPHA. It may be freely referenced with full acknowledgement of the OPHA, and may not be used for commercial purposes.