

NEWS RELEASE

Trading Standards seek to 'take-away' unhealthy Foods

Trading Standards have issued a warning of the dangers of eating excessive quantities of certain take-away foods.

A recent survey looking at the nutritional values of a range of take-away meals including fish and chips, pizza, doner kebab, Indian and Chinese style meals have revealed staggeringly high levels of fat, salt and calories.

In total 80 samples were taken from premises across the Yorkshire and the Humber Region and submitted to the Public Analyst laboratories in the region for comprehensive nutritional analysis. Of these, 69 samples (87%) were reported as having levels of calories, fat or salt higher than recommended limits.

One sample of doner kebab contained 22% fat which is classed as 'a lot' by Food Standards Agency guidelines. The same sample also contained 12.1 grams of salt which is over twice the recommended daily limit.

Whilst high fat levels may not come as a surprise to many in these types of foods, the overall levels of calories were seen as cause for concern. Over 2100 Calories were found in chicken balti, chow mein, fish and chips and pizza meals.

The main culprits for high salt levels were chow mein, chicken balti and doner kebab with average levels of salt found to be over 7.5 g per portion. Two samples in particular, chicken balti and special chow mein were found to contain 16.4g of salt each. The maximum recommended daily intake is 6g.

Fish and chips, pizza and doner kebabs contained much more saturated fat on average than the other foods, with two samples of fish and chips being clear losers in terms of their trans fat content. One contained 11.5 grams, the other 5.7 grams, in both cases about 11% of the fat present in the food.

Duncan Campbell, West Yorkshire Public Analyst in Leeds, explained that trans fats are produced commercially to harden vegetable oils into shortening and margarine. They have been linked to raised blood cholesterol levels and heart disease.

Trading Standards are concerned that excessive consumption of meals that are high in calories, fat and salt could damage the health of the community.

According to the Food Standards Agency, levels of obesity have tripled in England since 1980, and there is no sign of the upward trend stopping.

Currently, over half of women and about two-thirds of men are either overweight or obese.

Being overweight or obese increases the risk of developing heart disease, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoarthritis.

Trevor Gray, Principal Food Officer, West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service said “West Yorkshire has the dubious distinction of having the doner kebab with the highest fat and salt in the survey. The twelve grams of salt found in this kebab equate to 2 heaped teaspoons! All ten of the doner kebab samples from West Yorkshire contained excessive salt ranging from 5g to 12.1g. We have contacted these takeaways with the results and some have already indicated their willingness to work with us in reducing the salt and fat.

We also sampled the other takeaway ‘staples’ of burger and chips, fish and chips, sweet and sour chicken with egg fried rice, keema curry with 3 chapatis and pizza margherita. The fish and chips, burgers and pizzas on average contained about 12% fat whilst the keema curries and chinese takeaways generally had the lowest fat at around 6%. With salt, the pizzas and chinese came second to doners with an average of 5g.

We will attempt to work in partnership with the establishments involved to identify the source and purpose of the fat and salt and identify where steps could be taken to reduce these. This may take the form of changing a recipe or cooking method or simply to practice better portion control which will have benefits for both trade and consumers alike.”

Councillor Keith Wakefield, Deputy Chair of the Trading Standards Committee said, “This work highlights how Trading Standards are committed to improving the health and well-being of local people.

“Improving health will have a positive knock-on effect to the local economy, the health service and the general well being of the region. This project serves as an example of how local councils are striving to create healthier communities.”

For further information please contact Consumer Direct on 08454 04 05 06 or visit www.eatwell.gov.uk for help on choosing a healthy diet.

For individual nutritional advice please contact your GP and ask to be referred to your local registered Dietician.

Notes for Editors:

1. This project was undertaken as part of a Yorkshire and the Humber Trading Standards Group initiative. (YAHTSG)
2. YAHTSG consists of membership from 11 Trading Standards Services across the region serving a population of over 5 million people.

For further information please contact:

1. Tony Downham, Divisional Manager, West Yorkshire Trading Standards Service. Tel: 0113 3837503