

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Dietary habits became poorer and physical activity declined during the COVID-19 pandemic, a local telephone survey reveals**

(Hong Kong, 19 February 2024) – **The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic challenged Hong Kong residents in attempts to maintain healthy lifestyle habits. A research team from The Chinese University of Hong Kong has conducted 1500 telephone surveys and a trend analysis in October 2020 to study the impact of the third wave of COVID-19 on the prevalences of unhealthy dietary habits and physical inactivity levels in Hong Kong Chinese, and identified associated factors during the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings have been recently published in the *Hong Kong Medical Journal*.**

The study introduced a novel 9-item dietary screener, the Hong Kong Diet Score (HKDS), to evaluate Hong Kong residents' dietary habits and their adherence to the traditional Chinese eating pattern. It revealed the majority (51%) of the surveyed participants who had low scores were younger males. Greater proportions of participants (>50%) with lower household income, current smokers, and current drinkers had low HKDS scores. Physical inactivity, measured by a Chinese version of the International Physical Activity Questionnaire Short Form, was prevalent among non-married or chronically ill individuals during the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. A trend analysis comparing fruit and vegetable consumption as well as physical activity from 2003 to 2020 revealed a persistent decline in eating five daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Similar trend was observed in physical activity in 2020 despite a notable peak in 2019.

The study pointed out the disruption to usual routine during COVID-19 could lead to new dietary behaviours which exacerbated the decline in consuming healthier food choices. Men and women in all ages had dietary habits less adherent to the traditional Chinese eating pattern than 20 years ago, namely, less consumption of fresh produce, whole grains, legumes, and ocean fish. These changes in dietary habits are associated with increased incidence of non-communicable diseases. The subtle but consistent westernisation of dietary habits appears to be detrimental for residents who regularly consume food items of low fibre and high processed food content.

The article "Dietary habits and physical activity during the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic: associated factors, composite outcomes in a cross-sectional telephone survey of a Chinese population, and trend analysis" was published in the *Hong Kong Medical Journal*.  
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## 新聞稿

### 電話調查結果顯示新冠肺炎大流行期間港人飲食習慣較不健康及較少運動

(香港, 2024年2月19日) — 新冠肺炎大流行對香港居民保持健康生活習慣甚具挑戰性。香港中文大學的研究團隊於2020年10月進行了1,500份電話問卷調查及趨勢分析, 研究第三波疫情對香港華人飲食習慣和運動水平的影響, 並找出相關因素。研究結果已於《香港醫學雜誌》發表。

該研究引入了一種新的9項飲食篩查工具, 即香港飲食評分, 以評估香港居民的飲食習慣和他們對中國傳統飲食模式的跟從程度。結果顯示大多數(51%)得分較低的受訪者是年輕男性, 而大部分家庭收入較低、有吸煙或飲酒習慣的受訪者(>50%)的得分也較低。國際體力活動問卷調查簡短中文版的測量結果反映, 未婚或慢性病患者在第三波疫情期間普遍缺乏運動; 比較2003年至2020年水果和蔬菜進食量和身體活動的趨勢分析則顯示, 每天吃五份水果和蔬菜的人數持續下降。另外, 香港市民的運動水平儘管在2019年達到顯著高峰, 但在2020年呈現類似的下降趨勢。

該研究指出, 新冠疫情對日常生活習慣的破壞可能會引伸新的飲食行為, 從而令港人減少選擇健康食物。與20年前相比, 各個年齡組別的男性和女性的飲食習慣都不太符合中國傳統飲食模式, 即較少食用新鮮農產品、全穀物、豆類和海洋魚類。這些飲食習慣的改變與非傳染病的發病率增加相關。同時, 飲食習慣逐漸且持續西式化使港人經常食用纖維含量低的食物及加工食品, 似乎不利健康。

詳細內容可參閱原文《第三波新冠疫情的飲食習慣及體能活動: 相關因素、華裔人口橫斷面電話調查的綜合結果及趨勢分析》。

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Source: Winnie YY Lin, Martin CS Wong, J Huang, et al. Dietary habits and physical activity during the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic: associated factors, composite outcomes in a cross-sectional telephone survey of a Chinese population, and trend analysis. Hong Kong Med J 2024;30:Epub 19 Feb 2024. <https://doi.org/10.12809/hkmj2210265>.

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