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## Media release

May 2008

# EARLY NUTRITION CAN WE 'POSITIVELY' INFLUENCE LATER HEALTH? Unveiling the Infant & Toddler Forum's 2008 Educational Programme

Responding to the challenge to halt rising obesity levels and related illness amongst adults and increasingly young people, the Infant & Toddler Forum is focusing its 2008 programme, '**Early Nutrition for Later Health**', on the long term benefits of establishing good nutritional habits in early childhood.

Given that 40% -70% of obese children go on to become obese adults<sup>1</sup>, for many of the two-thirds of adults who are currently obese in England<sup>2</sup>, the foundations of later poor health may well lie in the early years – 0-3.

*"The Forum sees this period as a critical window of opportunity to ensure future health for the youngest generation",* comments I&T Forum chair, Prof Lawrence Weaver.

*"Recognising and correcting for poor diet and development in these early years can have lasting benefits that improve an individual's chances of becoming a healthy child and adult."*

The Government is calling on stakeholders with expertise at all levels to help meet its urgent targets to halt obesity. Frontline healthcare professionals such as midwives, health visitors, community, practice and nursery nurses, who work directly with parents, have a critical role to play to reverse present trends. Do they feel equipped and supported to truly fulfil this extended brief with current levels of time and resources?

Carolyn Taylor, health visitor and Infant & Toddler Forum member feels that the current provision of training and support for these professionals may not be enough to meet increasing public health responsibilities:

*"Recent and emerging Government targets present Health Visitors with a new challenge, that of prevention of poor health outcomes, making additional demands on their knowledge and skills. Also, traditional tasks, such as monitoring child growth for example, will require a shift in approach: we need to think of assessing growth as a 'strategic' diagnostic tool, and use it systematically and consistently to spot early signs of under and/or over nutrition, allowing for earlier intervention."*

*"Education and training will be key to supporting this shift, and ensuring that the right steps can be taken to meet targets. Recognising this need, the Infant & Toddler Forum are delivering specific advice to those working with 1-3yrs development and nutrition, to ensure this age group is properly understood and cared for, and that the benefits of instilling good food choices early on sustain into later life."*

Building on their 2007 programme, the Forum continues to provide evidence-based, practical resources that help in practice and in training, to complement and supplement available resources.

Visit [www.infantandtoddlerforum.org](http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org) for details of all initiatives; all materials are freely downloadable to healthcare professionals. Hard copies are also available to order.

## The 'Early Nutrition for Later Health' programme will include:

### Factsheets & other publications

- **Factsheets** - new topics for 2008 are:
    - **Obesity in Toddlers**
    - **Growth and its measurement**
    - **Understanding and managing constipation in toddlers (available in the second half of 2008)**
    - **Iron deficiency anaemia in toddlers (available in the second half of 2008)**
  - A new '**question of the month**' area on the website will address frequently asked questions and topical issues
  - A summary **report of the 2007 London study day** series will also be available for downloads from May
- All materials are free to download from the Forum's website - [www.infantandtoddlerforum.org](http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org)

### OPEN BOOK ON GROWTH Interactive tutorial

In spring 2008 The Forum will launch '**OPEN BOOK ON GROWTH**' - a new interactive online resource for understanding and monitoring childhood growth. This is in the form of a website incorporating a film showing growth measurement in practice. It can be used as a practical tool, or for training purposes and plans are underway to link it to CPD programmes of various professional bodies.

### 2008 Study days – 22 October, Institute of Child Health, London and 19 November, Leicester City Football Club, Leicestershire

Themed 'Early nutrition for later health', these practical sessions will explore the impact of early nutrition on mental and physical development, dental health and behaviour and will outline strategies to help develop good nutritional practices for long-term health. Places cost £35 or £90 for three. For more details and registration call our hotline on 0800 781 7194 or visit [www.infantandtoddlerforum.org](http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org)

### Fringe meetings at professional conferences

The Forum is planning to have a presence at a number of professional conferences throughout the year; visit the website for further information [www.infantandtoddlerforum.org](http://www.infantandtoddlerforum.org).

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### Notes to editors

#### About the Forum

- The Infant & Toddler Forum brings together representatives from paediatrics, neonatology, health visiting, dietetics and child psychology who share a common professional interest in infant and child health nutrition and development
- A goal of the Forum is to improve the access of healthcare professionals to reliable, evidence-based nutritional information relevant to their practice, which will equip them to advise and support the parents of infants and young children.
- The Forum is supported by an educational grant from the Infant Nutrition division of Nutricia. The views and outputs of the group, however, remain independent of Nutricia and its commercial interests

#### About Obesity

- Almost a fifth of two to five year olds in England are obese, while a further 14 percent are overweight.<sup>2</sup> If current trends continue, by 2050 about 25 per cent of children in Britain could be clinically obese.<sup>3</sup>
- Establishing good feeding patterns in early years could reduce the risk of developing obesity and other serious complications such as cardiovascular disease<sup>4</sup>, diabetes and high blood pressure<sup>1</sup>.
- Almost one in four of the children measured at reception age as part of the National Child Measurement Programme was either overweight or obese.<sup>5</sup>
- The Government's recent Foresight Report: Tackling Obesities; Future Choices, acknowledges that the UK has seen a significantly higher rise in the incidence of obesity compared with other parts of Europe.<sup>6</sup>

### For further information on the Forum initiatives, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Jain A. What works for obesity? A summary of the research behind obesity interventions. BMJ 30 April 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Health. Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives. January 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Department of Health. Foresight Report: Tackling Obesities: Future Choices. Summary of Key Messages. 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Lorch S, Sharkey, A. Myocardial Velocity, Strain, and Strain Rate Abnormalities in Healthy Obese Children. J Cardiometab Syndr. 2007 Winter;2(1):30-34.

<sup>5</sup> National Child Measurement Programme: 2006/07 school year headline results. February 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Health. Foresight Report: Tackling Obesities: Future Choices. 2007.