

### Results from SWAN diet studies

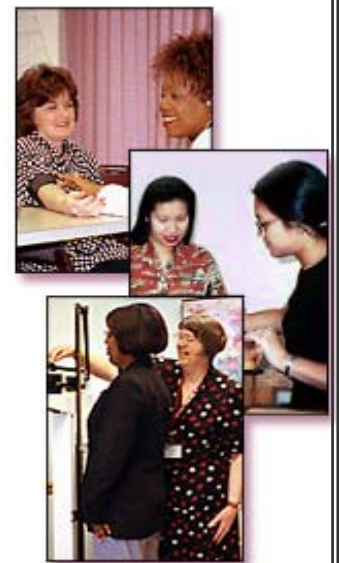
*March, 2003*

Of all the many questionnaires we use in the SWAN study, the diet questionnaire is one that many women find the most interesting and sometimes the most challenging. The questionnaire was used at your very first visit, and again at your 6<sup>th</sup> visit. The information we gather about your diet and the intake of various nutrients is critical to our understanding of how diet and health are related in women in the SWAN study. A study published last year in the scientific journal *Menopause* presented a summary of the variation in nutrient intake in women of different ethnicities in the SWAN study. (Reference: *Huang MH, et al. Variation in nutrient intakes by ethnicity: results from the Study of Women's Health Across the Nation (SWAN)* *Menopause* 2002; 9(5): 309-319)

International differences in health and disease, and the changes in health that result when people move from one country to another, suggest that things like diet and lifestyle might have an effect on health and disease. The diet information you provided in the diet questionnaire will make it possible for study investigators to explore the relationship between diet, menopause and health.

The SWAN diet questionnaire was developed by Dr. Gladys Block and her colleagues especially for the collection of diet information from women of diverse ethnicity in the United States. In addition to the usual questions about fruits, vegetables, meats and other foods, there were specific questions about foods eaten mostly in the ethnic groups participating in the SWAN study. Information about the variety of foods eaten in each ethnic group was drawn from previous studies as well as focus groups.

The results from the diet questionnaire that you completed in the first year are interesting. There do appear to be differences in diet and nutrient intake among the different ethnic groups in the SWAN study. For example, regular use of vitamins and minerals was reported by 61% of Japanese women, 57% of Caucasian women, 52% of Chinese women, 49% of African American women and 39% of Hispanic women.



## Results from SWAN diet studies Continued

For almost all nutrients, there were significant differences in intake among the different ethnic groups. The magnitude of the differences was small for some things, like carbohydrates and protein, and substantial for others like vitamin A and beta-carotene. For example, Japanese women eat the most soy, Chinese women eat the most antioxidants vitamins and Caucasian women the most calcium.

All this information about diet will be studied together with the other information we have collected in SWAN, and will help study investigators learn more about diet and its relationship to health at midlife women.

### In other SWAN news

We now have a new Coordinating Center!! The new CC is at the University of Pittsburgh, and replaces the CC that used to be in Boston. The role of a coordinating center in a study like SWAN is enormous. All seven sites look to the CC to coordinate the development of the study questionnaires, protocols and computer programs to enter and summarize all the data we collect. The Coordinating Center insures that the blood samples each site sends to the central laboratories get analyzed and results sent to the study sites so that the information can be sent to you.

You may have noticed that there have been some delays in getting results to you and some changes in the forms you complete. Some of these changes and delays were the result of having to make this transition. We are delighted to be working with this new Coordinating Center. We welcome the energy and enthusiasm they bring to SWAN.

### Your next visit

We will be starting the next cycle of visits soon. We look forward to seeing you!

### Please remember

The SWAN study has its own web page. So, if you have access to a computer (most public libraries have them), take a look and let us know what you think about it. It is a work in progress, and it will be changed from time to time, so you might want to check it out every few months!

[HTTP://WWW.SWANSTUDY.ORG](http://www.swanstudy.org)