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MEDIA STATEMENT

Nutritionist's advice on vitamin supplements during pregnancy sends confusing message

The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI), the industry body representing non-prescription consumer healthcare products said today that women should think carefully about their nutritional status and the need for nutritional supplements to rectify any deficiencies during pregnancy.

ASMI was responding to a newspaper article¹ quoting Dr Maria Makrides, Professor of Human Nutrition at the University of Adelaide, who is quoted as saying there is little scientific evidence to support taking iron or iodine supplements during or ahead of pregnancy.

ASMI Regulatory and Technical Manager of Complementary Medicines, Ruth Kendon said there are valid reasons for using vitamin and mineral supplements in pregnancy, that are supported by the latest official advice and research.

The suggestion that all supplementation is unwarranted is in direct contradiction to the advice of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) provided in January this year. That advice clearly makes the point that pregnant and breastfeeding women are not getting sufficient iodine.

The NHMRC recommends that women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or considering pregnancy take an iodine supplement of 150µg each day.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare says that there is serious concern in Australia about deficiencies in three vital nutrients - iodine, folate and vitamin D.

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand's 2008 publication, *The 22nd Australian Total Diet Study*, states that in regard to iodine, the prevalence of inadequate intakes was greater than 50 per cent among women aged 19 and older.

In regard to iron, even Professor Makrides was quoted in 2003 as saying that regular low-dose iron is necessary during pregnancy: "If a woman can't double her iron intake from

¹ Sydney Morning Herald, Vitamin use unnecessary: expert, 7 July 2010, [online](#).

food, then it would be appropriate to recommend routine low-dose supplements to make sure she is meeting the recommended dietary intake,” Dr Makrides states.²

Ms Kendon said that the best available advice from all official sources suggests that many women are deficient in iron and iodine, and that the use of nutritional supplements is necessary to rectify this imbalance in these cases.

About ASMI: The Australian Self-Medication Industry (ASMI) is the peak industry body for the Australian self care industry representing consumer healthcare products including over-the-counter medicines and complementary medicines. ASMI’s mission is to promote better health through responsible self-care. This means ensuring that safe and effective self-care products are readily available to all Australians at a reasonable cost. ASMI works to encourage responsible use by consumers and an increasing role for cost-effective self-medication products as part of the broad national health strategy. www.asmi.com.au

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² Regular low-dose iron best in pregnancy, Media Release, MyDr.com.au; 4 April 2003, [online](#).