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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attention News/Health/Food & Lifestyle Editors:

### **Majority of Canadians not changing diet to prevent seasonal illnesses**

*More than two-thirds of Canadians are not adapting to defend against cold and flu*

**TORONTO, ON** – (December 8, 2011) – With the official start of winter just weeks away, Canadians may be thinking more about what to put under the tree than taking the necessary steps to keep themselves in top form during the festive season. According to a survey commissioned by the Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC), while almost six in 10 Canadians are at least moderately concerned about getting sick during cold and flu season, 70 per cent say that they do not adapt their diets to prevent illnesses. Yet, simple adjustments can be the difference-maker when it comes to staying happy and healthy over the holidays.

“Along with snowmen and Santa Claus, for many families December brings sneezing and sniffles,” says Lydia Knorr, registered dietitian for the FDOC. “However, with just a few tweaks to dinner plates and breakfast bowls, Canadians could be giving themselves more hope of warding off colds and flus.”

#### **Workplaces breeding grounds for illness, but many Canadians not staying home when ill**

When it comes to seasonal illness, behaviours do not always mirror beliefs. For example, when asked what factor makes them most susceptible to getting a cold and the flu, 43 per cent of Canadians said that being around sick people at work or at home makes them the most vulnerable – far higher than any other reason. However, just nine per cent make a point of staying home every time they fall ill.

Almost a quarter (23 per cent) of Canadians feel that being stressed or overtired leaves the door open for colds and flus to spoil the holiday cheer. Knorr recommends consuming citrus as a way to help combat the holiday blues.

“A nutritious diet plays an integral role in supporting both physical and mental well-being,” says Knorr. “Simply increasing one’s intake of fresh, in-season fruit like Florida grapefruit can alleviate feelings of lethargy during the winter months and provide a natural boost in energy while delivering essential nutrients like vitamin C.”

#### **Proper hygiene a priority for cold and flu prevention**

In response to the question of which preventative methods Canadians tend to opt for, nearly three quarters (74 per cent) elect to wash their hands more often, with wearing weather-appropriate clothing (49 per cent) and getting more sleep (45 per cent) also being popular measures.

However, when it comes to preventative methods against cold and flu, only 38 per cent of Canadians take precautionary measures year-round. Knorr recommends that Canadians incorporate citrus into their diet year-round as a way to help protect against illnesses.

“Drinking a glass of Florida orange juice or enjoying a whole grapefruit with breakfast is a simple and nutritious way to help supply your body with vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that can aid in the fight against colds and flus. The vitamin C found in citrus fruit can support the body’s natural ability to fight infection and help keep your immune system in top shape this winter.”

#### **Help stave off sickness with citrus**



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When a cold or flu hits, naps and early bedtimes reign supreme, as 79 per cent of Canadians choose more sleep as the best remedy for illness. While only 37 per cent choose citrus as their preferred feel-better method, consuming one 250mL glass (one cup) of 100 per cent Florida orange juice or grapefruit juice, Canadians can receive 100 per cent of their daily value for vitamin C. As one of the most powerful antioxidants, vitamin C is a key nutrient that supports a healthy immune system and helps the body's natural ability to fight colds and flus.

"With Canadians gearing up for the holidays, colds and flus are unwelcome gifts that nobody wants to bring into their homes," says Knorr. "By incorporating citrus into daily snacks and meals, Canadians will feel the benefits of their important antioxidant components that can keep them and their families better protected from illnesses."

#### **Other highlights from the survey:**

- Attitudes and behaviours toward cold and flu differ between men and women. Generally, women are more concerned about getting sick during cold and flu season, with 66 per cent of women answering that they are at least moderately concerned, compared to only 53 per cent of men.
- Quebecers were the least concerned about getting sick during cold and flu season, as 63 per cent were not very concerned (versus 40 per cent nationally). Further, Quebecers were less likely to reach for a pillow to stave off cold and flu, with only 28 per cent believing that getting more sleep would protect them against illness, compared to 45 per cent nationally.
- Younger Canadians were more likely to recognize the benefits of citrus in cold and flu prevention, with 44 per cent of Canadians under age 25 being likely to reach for a glass of orange juice or other forms of citrus as a tactic to ward off illnesses. This compares to 29 per cent overall, with Canadians between the ages of 55-64 being the least likely to opt for citrus at 19 per cent.

#### **About the Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC)**

The Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) is an executive agency of the Florida government charged with the marketing, research and regulation of the Florida citrus industry. Its activities are funded by a tax paid by growers on each box of citrus that moves through commercial channels. A few of the popular varieties of Florida citrus fruit available in Canadian supermarkets are Ruby Red Grapefruit, Flame Grapefruit, and Marsh Grapefruit with 100 per cent pure Florida orange juice and Florida grapefruit juice available all year round.

#### **About the survey**

The results presented are based on a survey conducted by EKOS Research Associates from November 1-8, 2011. Using EKOS' Probit® online panel, 1,053 Canadians aged 18 and over were surveyed. Data was weighted by region, age, gender and education using the most recent census data.

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