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Heightened Sense of Taste Can Promote Weight Loss

Dr. Alan Hirsch Presents the Culmination of His 25 Years of Research at the 90th Annual Endocrinology Society Conference

Alan Hirsch, MD, founder and neurologic director of the *Smell & Taste Treatment and Research Foundation*, spoke at the 90th Annual Endocrinology Society Conference on June 17th to detail his findings in the link between smell and taste with weight loss.

As the leading authority on smell and taste, Dr. Hirsch has dedicated his career to the betterment of his patients' lives. His background as a neurologist and psychiatrist made him acutely aware that excess weight is a risk factor for many illnesses, including diabetes and cerebrovascular disease. In his studies, Dr. Hirsch found that patients suffering from head injuries who had lost their sense of smell & taste were gaining weight. This led him to the break-through discovery of the link between olfactory senses and food intake. He determined that the urge to eat is not governed by the stomach, as previously speculated, but is regulated by a specific portion of the brain called the "satiety center." Understanding the link between the loss of smell and weight-gain, Dr. Hirsch sought to prove that heightened smell can influence weight-loss.

As almost two-thirds of the U.S. population is overweight, Dr. Hirsch went on to conduct one of the largest weight-loss studies in the field. Dr. Hirsch gave his patients non-caloric "Tastants crystals," with a hypothesis that increasing sensory input would enhance gustatory-evoked satiety, thereby reducing overall caloric consumption. The patients were specifically asked to maintain the same diet and exercise regimen as they incorporated the Tastants into their meals. From a biological standpoint, this made sense because scents from the foods we eat help to trigger the release of hormones that tell the body it's time to stop eating — a phenomena known as sensory-specific satiety. Therefore, sprinkling Tastants onto food helps to suppress appetite and cravings, making a person less inclined to overindulge.

With 1,436 participants, the clinical studies proved efficacy with an average weight loss of 30.5 pounds in 6 months and a drop in BMI by an average of 5 points. The control group lost just an average of 2 pounds with a BMI average decrease of 0.3 points. Dr. Hirsch theorized that subjects lost more weight than controls did because the Tastants made them feel full faster, and therefore eat less. "The Tastants may have induced weight loss by enhancing the taste of the food, thereby accelerating the onset of sensory-specific satiety, causing participants to feel full faster and eat less," notes Dr. Hirsch in his study. In June 2008, the calorie-free Tastants will become available to the public under the name SENSEA.