Dietary assessment in the German National Cohort (GNC)

Sven Knüppel1, Matthias Clemens1, Johanna Conrad2, Sylvia Gastell1, Karin Michels3, Michael Leitzmann4, Lilian Krist5, Tobias Pischon6, Gerhard Krause7, Wolfgang Ahrens8,9, Nina Ebert10, Karl-Heinz Jöckel11, Alexander Kluttig12, Nadia Obi13, Rudolf Kaaks14, Wolfgang Lieb15, Sabine Schipf16,17, Hermann Brenner14,18, Thorsten Heuer19, Ulrich Harttig1, Jakob Linseisen20,21, Ute Nöthlings2 and Heiner Boeing1

1German Institute of Human Nutrition Potsdam-Rehbruecke (DIfE), Nuthetal, Germany, 2University of Bonn, Bonn, Germany, 3University of Freiburg, Freiburg, Germany, 4University of Regensburg, Regensburg, Germany, 5Charité-Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany, 6Max-Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine in the Helmholtz Association (MDC), Berlin, Germany, 7Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, Braunschweig, Germany, 8Leibniz Institute for Prevention Research and Epidemiology - BIPS, Bremen, Germany, 9University Bremen, Bremen, Germany, 10Leibniz Institute for Diabetes Research at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf, Germany, 11University of Duisburg-Essen, Essen, Germany, 12Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Halle (Saale), Germany, 13University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf, Hamburg, Germany, 14German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), Heidelberg, Germany, 15Christian-Albrechts University of Kiel, Kiel, Germany, 16University Medicine Greifswald, Greifswald, Germany, 17German Center for Diabetes Research (DZD), Greifswald, Germany, 18National Center for Tumor Diseases (NCT), Heidelberg, Germany, 19Max Rubner-Institut (MRI), Karlsruhe, Germany, 20Helmholtz Centre Munich, Neuherberg, Germany and 21UNIKA-T Augsburg, Augsburg, Germany

Abstract
We describe a novel dietary assessment strategy to estimate usual food intake in the ongoing large-scale multi-center German National Cohort (GNC). The dietary assessment is based on three 24 h food lists (24h-FL) and a food frequency questionnaire (FFQ) enriched by information from the representative German National Nutrition Survey II (NVS II). The novelty of this dietary assessment strategy is based on separating the probability of food intake from daily consumption amounts. The probability of consumption is estimated from 24h-FLs used in the GNC. To estimate daily consumption amounts, the already collected data of the NVS II are used. The 24h-FL simplifies the question on food consumption for all foods asked to consumption or not and so the questionnaire can be completed in about 10 minutes, reducing the burden on study participants. As proof of concept, we applied the assessment strategy to pretest data collected in 2012 to 2013 to assess the feasibility of the instruments. In brief, the novel dietary assessment strategy comprises three steps. First, the individuals' consumption probability is estimated by three 24h-FLs and one FFQ applying a logistic linear mixed model adjusted for characteristics of the participants. Second, person-specific daily consumption amounts are estimated from the NVS II applying a linear mixed model taking the characteristics of the participants into account. Third, usual food intake is estimated by the consumption probability multiplied by person-specific daily amounts. Usual intake of 41 food groups in 318 men and 377 women were estimated. Of those participants who completed the first 24h-FL, 84.4, and 68.5% completed the second and third 24h-FL, respectively. No associations were observed between probability to participate and lifestyle factors. The estimated usual food intake distributions were in a plausible range as shown by comparing the estimated energy intake to the energy needs approximated by estimated total energy expenditure. Total energy was estimated to be 2,707 kcal/day for men and 2,103 kcal/day for women. With a few exceptions, the estimated food-based consumption probabilities did not differ considerably between men and women. The differences in energy intake between men and women were mainly due to their differences in the estimated person-specific daily amounts. As a conclusion, plausible but not validated values for usual food intake were derived in the pretest study, so that the combination of three repeated 24h-FLs, an FFQ and person-specific daily amounts from an external source is a feasible strategy for dietary assessment.

Conflict of Interest
There is no conflict of interest.