

DROP THE SALT!

Campaign Bulletin

Issue 9 | March 2011

Welcome to the AWASH quarterly bulletin which provides an update on significant developments on salt issues in Australia and around the world since September last year. This campaign bulletin includes information on World Salt Awareness Week 2011, our latest research on salt levels in Australian bread products, details of the outcomes of a string of international meetings on salt reduction and current media work.

Salt Awareness Week 2011 – Salt and Men's Health

Planning is underway for this year's International Salt Awareness week coordinated by World Action on Salt and Health. The theme is Salt and Men's Health, with the aim of making people more aware of the risks of a high salt diet in men and to make men more responsible for their own health. Research indicates that men generally have a higher blood pressure than women, particularly at a younger age, are less likely to have their blood pressure measured, and are less likely to take action to reduce it when it is raised or to take blood pressure-lowering drugs.

Activities planned for the week in Australia include the publication of new research into salt levels in foods, the release of an international low salt cook book, and a gala event in Sydney on Wednesday 23rd March from 9am to 12pm followed by lunch. To register for this event please contact Lizzy on edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au with your name, title, organization and any dietary requirements by the 18th March or see www.awash.org.au

To coincide with Salt Awareness Week, Sue Radd and her team at the [Nutrition and Wellbeing Clinic](#) will be hosting a Unique Cookshop Event: No Pressure Cooking: Flavoursome Meals to Fight Hypertension. We are looking for a sponsor to help support this and future cooking workshop. If you may be interested contact Sue and her team on +61 2 9899 5208.

Introducing Mary-Anne Land



The AWASH team was fortunate to recruit a new member late last year. Mary-Anne Land has recently completed a Master of Public Health and has a background in exercise science and nutrition. Mary-Anne will be primarily responsible for managing work in NSW in relation to The George Institute's NHMRC Partnership Project to accurately assess and monitor population salt intakes.

DANGER!

3g

7.5g

4.5g

5.5g

3.5g

6g

WATCH OUT FOR SALT

EAT LESS THAN 6 GRAMS PER DAY

Too much salt raises blood pressure, leading to heart disease and stroke, the biggest killers of men.

World Salt Awareness Week
21st - 27th March 2011
www.worldactiononsalt.com

WASH
World Action on Salt & Health

This bulletin is published quarterly to update stakeholders and supporters on relevant issues. Further information can be found on the Drop the Salt! Campaign website at www.awash.org.au



Shaking news

Bread bakers – Salt shakers??

AWASH has issued two media releases in the last quarter. In November last year, The George Institute issued a report showing that less than half of bread products in Australian supermarkets have acceptable salt levels. The research found that salt levels in Australian bread products have not changed since 2007 despite the government's Food and Health Dialogue focusing on salt, and some companies acting on their commitments to reduce salt in their products. The release generated a lot of controversy and media coverage as it highlighted that all bread products from George Weston Foods had already met the 400mg/100g sodium target, yet other major manufacturers were still lagging behind.



Food industry juggernaut jumps red light on labelling

In February this year AWASH issued a media release in response to the Australian Food and Grocery Council's new education campaign to promote its Daily Intake Guide. Traffic Light Labelling to help consumers identify healthier food products was one of the key recommendations of the Blewett committee report published in January. Many public health groups welcome this recommendation. However, in a direct attempt to subvert the process, the Australian Food and Grocery Council launched a new campaign promoting its controversial Daily Intake Guide labelling scheme - widely criticized by public interest groups as not adequately protecting consumers' health.

AWASH Food Composition Database

In the meantime, AWASH now has in place an effective system for monitoring progress of the food industry. It has now completed the collection of nutrition data for processed food products for 2010. Nutrition information for over 10,000 food products have been collected into a central database and analysis will be taking place shortly to see whether there has been any change in sodium levels

since the baseline was published in 2008. AWASH has sent major manufacturers a copy of their nutrition information along with a request for companies to double-check the data for accuracy.

Update on NHMRC Salt Monitoring Project

Fantastic progress has been made on the NHMRC partnership project with AWASH, NSW Health, NSW Food Authority and the Australian Food and Grocery Council. This project will collect information about the amount of dietary salt consumed by people in NSW and Victoria.

Drop the Salt - we will investigate adult salt intake in NSW, by estimating the baseline mean daily salt consumption through 24hr and spot urine analysis, determining the major sources of salt in the adult diet using 24hr diet recall questionnaires and assessing consumer knowledge of the effects of diets high in salt (>6g/day) through self administered questionnaires. Research assistants have been recruited and training will take place shortly with a view to commencing the fieldwork in March/April.

Similar information will be collected within Victoria through Deakin University and the Baker IDI. Analysis will take place later in the year and the findings will be compared with the National Health Survey which is scheduled to commence later in 2011.

Together this information will provide new data about salt consumption levels in the Australian population, providing evidence based information to support the further development of effective local and national strategies for a sustained reduction in salt consumption of Australians, thus reducing the associated diseases and financial burden.

Australian conferences and events

- ▶ **Nutrition Society of Australia, Perth, December 2010**
Lizzy Dunford presented on "*The sodium content of Australian processed meat products*" at the Nutrition Society of Australia's Annual Scientific Meeting in Perth in December 2010.
- ▶ **Australian Society of Baking's Annual Conference, October 2010**
Lizzy Dunford was invited to speak on "Salt reduction and the AWASH strategy" at the Australian Society of Baking's 40th Annual Conference in Sydney in October 2010.
- ▶ **Public Health Association's 40th Annual Conference, Adelaide, September 2010**
Lizzy Dunford presented on "Monitoring nutrient composition of fast foods" at the Public Health Association of Australia's Annual Conference in Adelaide in September 2010.

Supporting international salt reduction efforts

The George Institute for Global Health has been involved in a range of international activities, following the series of regional salt reduction meetings that took place in Europe, the Asia Pacific and the Americas reported on in the last campaign bulletin. Jacqui Webster was invited to participate and present on monitoring activities being planned in Australia and Fiji at a meeting convened by the World Health Organisation and the Government of Canada in Calgary in October and The George Institute is now assisting in the preparation of a Framework for Monitoring and Evaluation which will be made available to Member States later this year.

Jacqui Webster and Professor Bruce Neal were both invited to participate and speak at a Health Policy Roundtable on salt reduction in Beijing in December 2010. The meeting was convened by The George Institute China and Peking University Health Science Centre and attended by the Chinese Ministry of Health. Progress towards developing a strategy for salt reduction in China is now underway. Professor Bruce Neal recently travelled to Malaysia and India to meet with governments and key stakeholders to discuss the planned development of salt reduction activities in those countries.

The George Institute has been commissioned by the WHO South Pacific Office to support the development of salt reduction strategies in a number of Pacific Islands. A Food Industry Salt Action Challenge meeting took place in November in Fiji and the Health Minister there is now considering the potential for targets for salt levels in foods. Salt consultations have also taken place in the Solomon Islands and Nauru and considerations are being given to actions that can be taken regionally to support salt reduction activities. For further information contact Jacqui Webster on +61 2 9993 4520 or jwebster@georgeinstitute.org.au.

Global Branded Food Composition Database

AWASH has been meeting with stakeholders in the UK, USA, France, Canada, Norway, China, Singapore, India, Fiji, The Philippines, South Africa and New Zealand to discuss collaboration on a global branded food database project. The overall goal of the collaboration is to bring together readily available data about the composition of fast foods and processed foods globally that can be used to drive national and international improvements in the food supply. The World Health

Organisation provided some seed funding to develop a model template for the database which it will be making available to members. Please [contact Lizzy Dunford](#) if you would like to be involved in this project.

Publications

The following academic publications involving the AWASH team have been published since September last year:

- ▶ Dunford E, Webster J, Barzi F, Neal B. *Nutrient content of products served by leading Australian fast food chains*. *Appetite*. 2010;55(3):484-9
- ▶ Webster JL, Li N, Dunford EK, Nowson CA, Neal BC. *Consumer awareness and self-reported behaviours related to salt consumption in Australia*. *Asia Pac J Clin Nutr* 2010 Dec;19(4):550-554
- ▶ Ni Mhurchu C, Capelin C, Dunford EK, Webster JL, Neal BC, Jebb SA. *Sodium content of processed foods in the United Kingdom: analysis of 44,000 foods purchased by 21,000 households*. *Am J Clin Nutr*. 2010 Dec 29. [Epub ahead of print].

Become an AWASH Supporter

Don't forget that the success of the Drop the Salt! campaign depends on widespread support from all stakeholders including consumers, industry, government and other interested groups. If you support AWASH's mission and goals, why not sign on to become a supporter? Becoming an AWASH supporter is free. For more information, or to sign up as a supporter, visit: <http://www.awash.org.au/about-supporters.html>.

Please feel free to send this newsletter on to friends or colleagues that you think would be interested in becoming a supporter of AWASH.

For further information, to comment on anything in this bulletin or suggest issues for future Drop the Salt! bulletins contact Lizzy Dunford on 02 8507 2529 or email edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au.

