

DROP THE SALT!

**AWASH Fast Food
Key Findings
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Prepared by: The Secretariat of the Australian Division of World Action
on Salt and Health



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BACKGROUND

Australians are currently consuming around nine grams of salt each day. Government advice is that people should eat no more than 4 grams of salt a day with an upper maximum limit of 6 grams. Excess salt consumed throughout life is bad for health, causing blood pressure to rise with age, which increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The good news is that reducing salt intakes can reverse these risks. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) Drop the Salt! Campaign was launched in May 2007. It aims to improve the health of the Australian population through a gradual reduction in dietary salt that will reduce cardiovascular diseases and other salt-related health problems. AWASH will achieve this mission by promoting the benefits of salt reduction throughout all sectors of the Australian community, including industry, consumers, scientists, healthcare workers, government, regulatory bodies and professional organisations.

Most of the salt consumed by Australians is not salt added during cooking or at the table but salt already hidden in processed foods. A key objective of the AWASH strategy is therefore to work with the food ingredients, manufacturing, retail, and food service industries to reduce the sodium content of packaged foods by an average 25% of the next five years. AWASH is currently collaborating closely with food retail and manufacturing bodies to implement a strategy to achieve this objective.

However, an increasing proportion of food is now eaten outside the home and therefore AWASH is keen to engage with the food service and catering industries more effectively. The fast food industry represents an area within food service that can contribute substantially to the levels of salt consumed in meals outside the home.

In September 2007 and 2008, AWASH collected information on the sodium content of products and meals available in the major fast food chains in Australia direct from their websites. This report highlights the key findings from this research.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The primary objective of this project was to report on the sodium content of foods provided by six of the major fast food chains in Australia and assess what contribution they made to dietary guidelines. A secondary objective was to determine whether there had been any changes in the sodium content of foods provided by these fast food chains between 2007 and 2008.

The sodium values (either per 100g, per serve or both, depending on data availability) and portion sizes of fast food products were collected from the company websites in September 2007 and 2008 for the following companies:

- KFC
- Hungry Jack's
- Oporto Australasia
- Red Rooster
- Subway
- McDonald's

Products from each company were then categorised into the following groups:

- Burgers
- Sandwich-style products
- Salads (both with dressing and without) (2008 data only)
- Chicken products (2008 data only)
- Fries (2008 data only)

For every individual product in each category listed above, the portion size, sodium in mg/portion and salt in g/portion was determined. The percentage contribution of each product to the 1600mg Suggested Dietary Target (SDT) and 2300mg Upper Limit (UL) as indicated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) were then calculated, as well as a range and mean sodium value for each category.

Additional analyses were performed as follows:

- The sodium content of a children's meal in 2008 (as specified by each company website)
 - The sodium per serve was determined, as well as the percentage contribution of each serve to the SDT
- The meal providing the highest amount of sodium from each company in 2008 was determined

Some of the results in this document are reported in salt as well as sodium. To convert grams of sodium to grams of salt, multiply by 2.5.

The information in this report is based on the information available on the company websites and does not take into account the fact that some companies may have made changes to product formulations that are not yet reflected on the website. Each company was contacted for information about what it is doing to reduce salt in foods. Both McDonald's and Subway have provided us with information about salt reduction programs.

Subway has since written to AWASH outlining reductions to the sodium content of some products which have not yet been reflected on their website.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Three quarters of burger and sandwich-style products provided more than 50% of the recommended daily amount of salt.
- Just one burger can contain 150% and just one sandwich can contain over 100% of an adult's recommended daily amount of salt.
- The children's meal from each company provided over 2g of salt; more than 50% of the recommended daily amount for adults.
- The highest salt meal from each company exceeded 100% of the recommended daily amount of salt for adults, with the highest containing over 7g of salt.
- There were very few changes in the salt levels of products between 2007 and 2008.
- McDonald's products were the lowest in salt and it was the only company that showed any reduction in salt between 2007 and 2008 but only in ¼ of the burgers surveyed.

Burgers - KFC's Zinger Double BBQ Bacon & Cheese burger provided the highest amount of sodium, with 2410mg per burger (150% of the SDT), and McDonald's Hamburger providing the lowest, with 433mg (27% of the SDT) per burger (**see tables 1 & 4**).

Sandwich-style - In both 2007 and 2008, Red Rooster’s Chicken BLT Baguette provided the highest amount of sodium, with 1624mg per serve (102% of the SDT), and Subway’s 6-inch Veggie Delite providing the lowest, with 475mg (30% of the SDT) per serve (**see table 2 & 5**).

Children’s meals – In 2008, KFC’s children’s meal provided the lowest amount of salt, and Red Rooster the most, however there was a great variation in meal sizes (**see table 6**).

High salt meals – In 2008, Red Rooster had the highest salt meal, providing 194% of the SDT. The highest salt meal for each company exceeded 100% of the recommended daily amount (**see table 7**).

Data for 2007

Table 1: Sodium data for burgers 2007

	KFC	Hungry Jack’s	Oporto	Red Rooster	McDonald’s
No. prods	8	15	10	4	12
Sodium (mg/serve)	1021-2410	528-1436	545-1500	768-1644	433-1152
% 1600mg target	64-150%	33-90%	34-94%	48-103%	27-72%

Table 2: Sodium data for sandwich-style products 2007

	Subway	KFC	Hungry Jack’s	Oporto	Red Rooster	McDonald’s
No. prods	32	2	6	3	8	6
Sodium (mg/serve)	475-1580	1074-1150	751-1327	1053-1918	583-1624	640-1189
% 1600mg target	30-99%	67-72%	47-82%	66-120%	36-102%	40-74%

Data for 2008

Table 3: Sodium data for all products in 2008

Product	No of products >50% SDT	% products >50% SDT
Burgers	38/50	76
Sandwiches	48/62	77
Chicken products	19/32	59
Fries (regular)	0/5	0

Table 4: Sodium data for burgers 2008

	KFC	Hungry Jack's	Oporto	Red Rooster	McDonald's
No. prods	8	14	10	3	15
Sodium (mg/serve)	1021-2410	528-1436	707-1500	768-1644	433-1587
% 1600mg target	64-150%	33-90%	44-94%	48-103%	27-99%

Table 5: Sodium data for sandwich-style products 2008

	Subway	KFC	Hungry Jack's	Oporto	Red Rooster	McDonald's
No. prods	32	2	6	3	7	10
Sodium (mg/serve)	475-1580	1074-1150	751-1446	1053-1918	583-1652	640-1342
% 1600mg target	30-99%	67-72%	47-82%	66-120%	36-102%	40-74%

Table 6: Sodium data for children's meals* in 2008

Company	Meal size (g)	Sodium (mg/meal)	% 1600mg SDT	Products included
KFC	211	836	52	Original recipe chicken, small seasoned chips
Hungry Jack's	489	1169	73	Cheeseburger, small fries, small choc shake
Oporto	240	1051	66	Kiddo burger, small fries
Red Rooster	275	1268	79	Cheeseburger, small fries
Subway	183	976	61	Roast beef sub, double choc-chip cookie
McDonald's	561	1212	76	Cheeseburger, small fries, small choc shake

* children's meal as specified on company web-site

Table 7: Sodium data for meal providing the highest amount of sodium for each company in 2008

Company	Meal size (g)	Sodium (mg/meal)	% 1600mg SDT	Products included
KFC	505	1184	191	Zinger Double BBQ Bacon & Cheese Burger, large seasoned chips
Hungry Jack's	894	2451	153	Whopper Double Beef w/ Cheese Burger, large onion rings, large choc shake
Oporto	470	1959	122	Big Bondi Burger, large fries
Red Rooster	567	3107	194	Classic half chicken meal
Subway	231	1580	100	Spicy Italian 6-inch Sub
McDonald's	1058	2343	146	Double Quarter Pounder, large fries, large choc shake

NB. Subway has since written to AWASH outlining reductions to the sodium content of some products which have not yet been reflected on their website.

