

DROP THE SALT!

The Drop the Salt! campaign, launched in May 2007, aims to reduce the average amount of salt consumed by Australians to 6 grams per day within the next five years. It will do this by working with the food industry and other organisations to reduce salt in processed foods and raise consumer awareness. Many Australian companies have already started reducing the salt content of their products and real improvements have been made. AWASH is currently working with the food industry to achieve an overall reduction in the salt content of processed foods by 25% over a five year period.

AWASH ACTION ON CHILDREN

It is important that children are protected from the harmful effects of eating too much salt from an early age. As such, AWASH will be:

- Working with the food industry to promote concerted action to reduce salt in foods eaten by children as part of its food industry strategy
- Working with government to make salt reduction a national priority, including monitoring salt in foods and raising awareness of the fact that children need to eat even less salt than adults
- Working with a range of children's health and charitable organisations to raise awareness about salt and children's health.

PROTECT CHILDREN FROM TOO MUCH SALT

The success of the Drop the Salt! campaign and its impact on children's health, depends on widespread support from consumers, industry, government and other interested groups. The aims and objectives of the campaign are already supported by many individuals and national institutions. If you would like to know more about salt in food, AWASH, or how you can get involved with the Drop the Salt! campaign please contact the:

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AWASH 'BE SALT AWARE!' GUIDANCE TO PARENTS

Parents can make gradual changes to reduce the salt intakes of their families, including their children. This includes following general healthy eating advice as well as taking specific steps to reduce salt. See the box below for tips on being Salt Aware.

SALT AWARE TIPS

- Prepare food with fresh vegetables for lunch and evening meals
- Make healthy snacks convenient, e.g. have fresh fruit pre-chopped and keep low fat yoghurt in the fridge and healthy muffins in the freezer ready to be warmed up
- Avoid buying high fat, high sugar or high salt snack foods
- Keep takeaways and fast foods such as burgers, fried chicken and pizza to an occasional treat
- Include healthier options such as boiled eggs and salad, raw vegetable sticks and fresh fruit pieces in lunch boxes
- Check food labels for salt to compare products, brands and varieties and choose the lower salt options.
- Choose low salt foods (< 120mg/100g) where possible and avoid high salt (> 500mg/100g) foods
- Don't add salt to your children's food during cooking and discourage them from adding salt at the table
- Use lemon juice, garlic, vinegar, or herbs and spices as an alternative to salt whilst cooking
- Avoid stock cubes, soy sauce, mustard, pickles and mayonnaise where possible. At the very least choose low salt varieties.
- Limit salty snacks to once a week as a treat



DROP THE SALT! PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN



THE GEORGE
INSTITUTE
for International Health

AWASH
Australian Division
of World Action on Salt & Health

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SALT ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Children need very little salt to stay healthy and should eat much less than adults. While it is well known that salt increases the risk of high blood pressure, stroke and heart attack in older people the harmful effects of salt on children are much less well recognised - too much salt in childhood produces a serious rise in blood pressure that progressively worsens with age. Eating too much salt probably also plays a central role in childhood obesity as salt makes people thirsty so that they drink more soft drinks which are often high in calories.

HOW MUCH SALT ARE CHILDREN EATING

Most children in Australia are likely to be eating more salt than is recommended. In a recent survey of parents, over half reported that their children were eating salty snacks at least a few times each week. Most knew that salt could have harmful effects on children's health and most said they were concerned about the amount of salt in their children's food.

New information about how much salt children are eating will be available in the autumn when the results of the Children's National Diet and Physical Activity Survey are published. In the meantime, parents should be aware that eating just one takeout meal can quickly push your child over the recommended maximum.

HOW MUCH SALT SHOULD CHILDREN EAT?

The National Health and Medical Research Council has set the following Recommended Upper Daily Intakes for infants and children:

Age Group (yrs)	Recommended Daily Intake (grams of Salt)	These recommendations are, however, just a practical guide. For optimal health most children (and adults too) actually need much less.
1-3	2.5	
4-8	3.5	
9-13	5	
14-18	5.75	

THE BENEFITS OF LOWERING CHILDREN'S SALT INTAKE

The benefits of salt reduction are not restricted to adults. Children that reduce their salt intake have lower blood pressures, will eat a generally more healthy diet and are likely to have fewer health problems and better eating patterns in adulthood. In particular, reducing salt consumption in childhood will lower the chances of high blood pressure, stroke and heart attack in later life. Families with a history of these conditions should make particular efforts to cut out salt and protect the health of their children.

HIDDEN SALT IN CHILDREN'S DIETS

Most salt in Australian diets comes from processed foods. Foods regularly eaten by children such as bread, breakfast cereals, processed meat, cheese and takeaway meals can have very high levels of 'hidden' salt. A hamburger contains as much as 2.3g of salt and a large portion of fries over 1g, so that in just one meal a child can consume over half an adult's recommended daily intake of salt and almost the entire recommended maximum daily intake for a 4-8 year old.

Bread is eaten by most children every day in Australia. Eating just four slices a day could provide 2g of salt - over half the maximum daily intake for a 4-8 year old. According to the National Heart Foundation of Australia a single ham and cheese sandwich can provide more than a 4-8 year old's recommended daily intake of salt and one processed cheese stick almost all the salt a three year old should have in a day.

CHOOSING LOW SALT FOODS

Fortunately there is a huge range of foods on the market for children and you can make choices to control the amount of salt your children eat. Salt is listed on the nutrition panels of food labels as sodium.

It is now generally accepted that:

- Foods with less than 120mg/100g of sodium are low in salt
- Foods with more than 500mg/100g of sodium are high in salt

CHECKING THE LABELS

Checking food labels is really important. The amount of salt in different brands of the same product can be hugely different. The lowest salt brand of cornflakes for example, has about the same amount of salt as when the corn was harvested from the field (3mg/100g) and is a very health choice. By contrast, the highest salt brand of cornflakes has 820mg/100g, more than 250 times more! Check the labels and choose the lowest. The table below shows the range of sodium levels in different foods commonly eaten by children.

Range of Sodium content per 100 g	
Corn flakes	3.0 mg - 820.0 mg
Baked beans	170.4 mg - 500.0 mg
Pizza (frozen)	345.0 mg - 700.0 mg
Cheddar cheese	390.0 mg - 1677.0 mg
White sliced bread	420.0 mg - 568.75 mg
Corn chips (flavoured)	448.0 mg - 930.0 mg

Original data provided by www.eatingsafe.com

To calculate how much salt is in a product you have to multiply the amount of sodium by 2.5. So, 120mg sodium = 300mg salt

AWASH 'BE SALT AWARE!' GUIDANCE TO WHAT IS AWASH?

World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) was established in 2005 and has over 200 members in more than 50 countries. The Australian Division of WASH (AWASH) established in October 2005, is a growing network of representatives from the medical profession, scientific community, food industries, consumer associations, education and health promotion bodies. All support the health benefits of a population-wide reduction in dietary salt for Australia.