

DROP THE SALT!

Campaign Bulletin

Issue 3 | December 2008

Drop the Salt! News Room

World Salt Awareness Week

Welcome to the third edition of the AWASH quarterly bulletin which provides an update on significant developments on salt issues since May this year. Most importantly, World Action on Salt and Health has just announced that the theme for next year's Salt Awareness Week (2nd – 8th February) is Salt and Eating Out. AWASH is planning to host an event on Thursday the 5th February in Sydney to consider action needed to reduce salt levels in snacks and meals eaten outside of the home. Contact Lizzy Dunford at edunford@george.org.au if you have ideas or are interested in participating in this event, or watch this space for further details.

Food industry strategy

AWASH will be tackling salt levels in snacks and meals eaten outside of the home as part of our strategy to work with the food industry to reduce salt in foods, over the next five years. AWASH released the Food Industry Strategy Draft Document for consultation for comments in July. It has a particular focus on bread, processed meat and fast food. Meetings have recently been held with Sanitarium, Hans, George Weston Foods, Woolworths and Subway to discuss implementation of the strategy. AWASH is requesting Company Action Plans by December this year.

Salt in children's foods

As part of the food industry strategy, AWASH has recently undertaken a project looking at the salt levels of foods from six major fast food chains in Australia. This found that some meals contained over the daily recommended maximum amount of salt for adults. What's more, some meals marketed to children contained over 3 grams of salt. This goes some way towards explaining the worrying findings of the recently released Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey which showed boys are eating up to over 9 grams of salt each day, and girls up to over 6 grams! The report also showed that only 2% of children aged 14-16 were eating the recommended amount of fruit and vegetables.

Government engagement and the need for salt targets

The results of the Children's survey reinforce the need for government to take leadership on the salt issue, including by considering integrating salt messages into wider health promotion campaigns and the development of salt level targets. To support the case for stronger government engagement, AWASH (with funding from NSW Health, Sydney West Area Health Services and the George Institute) commissioned Sydney Health Projects Group to put together a background paper reviewing the effectiveness of salt interventions in different countries. The paper will go to the Food Regulation Standing Committee (FRSC) with proposals for action in December. One of the proposals is that FRSC consider the development of salt targets for a range of product categories. In the UK, the Food Standards Agency has just reviewed its 2010 salt reduction targets for processed foods and is proposing new targets for 2012 (see International Developments).

Media and Communications

Sausage Sizzle press release headline

Many of you will have received AWASH's Sausage Sizzle Report in July this year, along with a copy of the Food Industry Strategy document. The Sausage Sizzle Report found that one sausage sandwich at your local barbecue could contain up to 6 grams of salt; 100% of the daily recommended upper level of intake for adults, and double that for children. The report received extensive media attention, including newspaper coverage in *The Australian*, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*, as well as National and Regional radio and television stations. AWASH chair Professor Bruce Neal was also invited to appear on Channel 10 News.



This bulletin will be published quarterly to bring stakeholders and supporters up to date with relevant issues. Further information can be found on the Drop the Salt! Campaign web-site at www.awash.org.au



Salt and Children's Food press release headline

On the back of the Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey, AWASH released a Key Findings Document and press release on the salt levels in foods marketed to children. Media coverage included The Sydney Morning Herald, Herald Sun newspaper, and National and Regional radio coverage.

Strategic Review Report

AWASH will shortly be releasing its Strategic Review Report for 2007/08, which includes information on AWASH activities for the financial year from 2007-2008.

Published articles

AWASH has had four articles on salt published since June:

- July issue of Intouch, the newsletter for the Public Health Association of Australia – "Nutrition in chronic disease – a link with mental health?" by Elizabeth Dunford.
- September issue of Intouch – "Salt reduction – an effective way to reduce the burden of cardiovascular disease in Australia". Elizabeth Dunford and Jacqui Webster.
- October issue of Salt Skip News, the newsletter for the Salt Skip Program – "AWASH salt reduction strategies". Elizabeth Dunford.
- October issue of Perspectives "Salt Reduction: more potential than you might think." Professor Bruce Neal.

Conferences and Events

Population Health Congress, July 2008, Brisbane

AWASH Senior Project Manager Jacqui Webster presented research on salt and children's health at the Population Health Congress held in Brisbane in July.

Baker Heart-George Institute Symposium

Jacqui Webster was invited to give a talk on "A Life for Less Salt" at the Advances in Cardiovascular and Metabolic Medicine Symposium held by the Baker Institute in Melbourne in July.

Menzies 3rd Annual Emerging Health Policy Research Conference, October 2008

Jacqui presented a talk entitled "Reducing salt in Australian processed foods – the need for government intervention" at this year's Menzies Health Policy Research Conference in Sydney.

National Stroke Week, September 2008

National Stroke Week was held from 15th-21st September, aiming to increase public education about stroke awareness and prevention in the community. The National Stroke Foundation encouraged all Australians



to know the warning signs of stroke - facial weakness, arm weakness, speech difficulties – the 'FAST' test. See <http://www.strokefoundation.com.au/strokeweek-national-stroke-week> for further details.

Nutrition Society of Australia Annual Scientific Meeting, December 2008

Both Jacqui Webster and Lizzy Dunford will be presenting at the Nutrition Society of Australia's Annual Scientific meeting in early December on salt and cardiovascular disease.

Latest Research on Salt and Health

It is widely known that a low salt diet can help reduce blood pressure. However, more and more research is showing that a low salt diet can have benefits that extend beyond cardiovascular health.

Salt loading dangerous for everyone

This recent study, from the June issue of Hypertension, found that even people with normal blood pressure levels had adverse cardiovascular effects when they consumed a large amount of salt.

Genetics and salt intake – a link?

A study in the August issue of The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition supported the association between sodium intake and blood pressure levels, but also found that some people's genetic make-up predisposes them to have further increases in blood pressure than the general population when consuming high levels of salt.

Salt intake linked to increased risk of heart disease

A study in the July issue of The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that a high sodium intake, along with a low potassium intake, increased the risk of mortality in the Japanese population. Similarly, research from Canada published in the June issue of the Canadian

Journal of Cardiology also found a link between sodium intake and increased risk of mortality.

High salt intake decreases calcium absorption

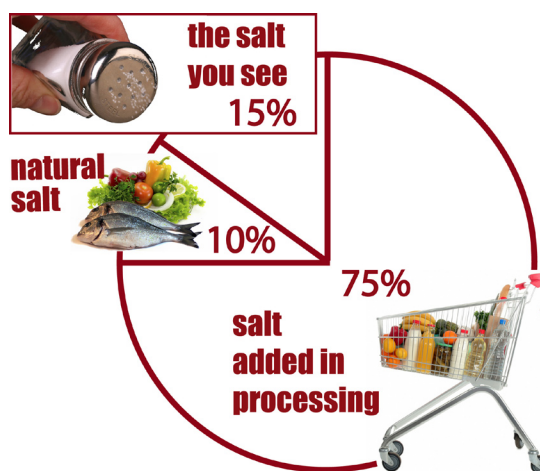
A study in the September issue of The Journal of Bone and Mineral Research found that a high sodium intake had adverse effects on calcium absorption.

Further links between salt intake and asthma

Recent research in the September issue of Epidemiology demonstrated a link between a high salt intake and wheeze and asthma in children.

International Developments

- ▶ The FSA in the UK has reviewed its 2010 salt reduction targets for processed foods and have set new targets for 2012. Further details on developments in the UK can be seen by accessing the CASH homepage; <http://www.food.gov.uk>.
- ▶ The Federally funded Canadian Stroke network has launched a new website to promote salt reduction www.sodium101.ca.
- ▶ New guidelines for nutrition labelling on packaged foods have been introduced in China. The new guidelines will have to detail levels of sodium per 100g, per 100ml or per serving, as well as labelling nutrient content as a percentage of the nutrient reference value.
- ▶ Recent evidence showed that salt intakes in the UK have dropped from 9.5g to 8.6g since the year 2000. This is huge support for their salt reduction campaign.



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 Elizabeth Dunford on 02 85072529 or email edunford@george.org.au.