

*AWASH 2008 Consumer Survey on Parents' Attitudes to Salt and Children*

# **PARENTS' ATTITUDES TO SALT AND CHILDREN**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY JANUARY 2008**

Prepared by: The Secretariat of the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health

---

## *AWASH 2008 Consumer Survey on Parents' Attitudes to Salt and Children*

### **BACKGROUND**

The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) seeks to improve the health of the Australian population by achieving a gradual reduction in dietary salt that will reduce cardiovascular diseases and other salt-related health problems. AWASH seeks to 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.

As part of this effort, AWASH has planned a number of different surveys about issues relating to salt amongst the Australian population. The surveys will seek to collect information about the level of knowledge relating to salt and health, to identify opportunities to reduce salt intake levels, to better understand food labelling issues and to monitor the impact of the AWASH 'Drop the Salt!' campaign.

The first survey was published in May 2007 providing a baseline from which the effects of the 5-year AWASH Action Plan can be evaluated. The report '2007 Survey of Australian consumer awareness and practices relating to salt' was published online at:

[http://www.awash.org.au/documents/AWASH\\_ConsumerSurveyReport\\_2007\\_05\\_15.pdf](http://www.awash.org.au/documents/AWASH_ConsumerSurveyReport_2007_05_15.pdf)

The survey was sponsored by The George Institute for International Health.

The second survey reported here was conducted in November 2007 amongst Australian parents of children aged 0-18 and was sponsored by The George Institute for International Health.

### **SURVEY DESIGN AND METHODS**

The primary aim of the survey was to collect information about parents' perception on the relationship between salt and children's health. The survey was designed by AWASH and conducted by 'Woolcott Research' using the OmniAccess Consumer service during 23rd – 25th November 2007.

OmniAccess Consumer is a fortnightly Australian national omnibus survey that covers 1,000 adults aged 16 years and over, including both capital city and non-capital city areas. Interviews were conducted in-house using CATI (computer assisted telephone interviewing) with telephone numbers randomly selected from electronic White Pages. All interviewers were personally trained and briefed in-house.

---

## *AWASH 2008 Consumer Survey on Parents' Attitudes to Salt and Children*

Quotas were set for capital city areas (in all states except Tasmania and the Northern Territory) as follows:

	<u>Capital City</u>	<u>Rest of State</u>	<u>Total</u>
NSW	240	100 (incl.ACT)	340
VIC	180	60	240
QLD	70	70	140
SA	70	40	110
WA	70	40	110
TAS	-	-	40
NT	-	-	20
Total Sample Size			1,000

The AWASH questions were run for all parents nationally who have children aged 0 - 18 years (n=252).

### **MAIN FINDINGS**

- 86% of the respondents knew that salt/sodium could have harmful effects on children's health and over half (53%) had substantial concerns about salt in children's food
  - Over half (52%) of the respondents reported that their children were eating salty snacks at least a few times a week
  - About half reported often trying to buy low salt (53%) or no added salt (47%) foods and 46% reported that they did not often add salt at the table.
  - More said that they often tried to control children's access to salty snacks (61%) and use of salt at the table (58%).
  - The majority of respondents (83%) said that more action needed to be taken to reduce the salt content of children's foods.
  - The respondents are 252 parents of 383 children who are aged 0-18 across Australian major states and territories.
-

**APPENDIX—QUESTIONNAIRE** (with main results indicated)

**Note – percentage figures may not always add to 100% due to rounding.**

Q1. In your household, how many children are there in each of the following age groups?

0-4 years	<b>80</b>
5-9 years	<b>98</b>
10-14 years	<b>114</b>
15-18 years	<b>91</b>

Q2. How concerned are you about the following aspects of food in your children's diet?  
(Very concerned or concerned vs. slightly concerned or not at all concerned)

a. Artificial flavours	<b>65%</b>
b. Artificial colours	<b>65%</b>
c. Salt/sodium	<b>53%</b>
d. Sugar	<b>66%</b>
e. Energy (calories)	<b>47%</b>
f. Saturated fat	<b>74%</b>

Q3. Do you think that salt/sodium can have harmful effects on children's' health?

Yes	<b>86%</b>
No	<b>8%</b>
Don't know	<b>6%</b>

Q4. How often do your children eat salty snacks such as chips, salted nuts, savoury biscuits etc.?

Most days each week	<b>15%</b>
A few days a week	<b>38%</b>
Special occasions only	<b>34%</b>
Almost never	<b>13%</b>

Q5. How often do you take the following actions to control the salt intake of the children in your household? (Often vs. sometime or never)

a. Try to buy low salt food	<b>53%</b>
b. Try to buy no added salt food	<b>47%</b>
c. Do not add salt during cooking	<b>46%</b>
d. Control children's access to salty snacks	<b>61%</b>
e. Control children's access to salt shakers	<b>58%</b>

Q6. Medical research suggests that most children eat more salt than is good for them. Do you think more action needs to be taken to reduce the salt in children's food?

Yes	<b>83%</b>
No	<b>13%</b>
Don't Know	<b>4%</b>

---