

DROP THE SALT!

**AWASH Key Findings Document II
Salt levels in selected foods commonly eaten by
children**

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on Salt and Health



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BACKGROUND

The recently released 2007 Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey found that children aged 2-16 years are consuming amounts of salt well above the recommended maximum levels. Boys were found to be consuming up to over 9 grams of salt, and girls up to over 6 grams of salt.

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.

A key objective of the AWASH strategy is to work with the food retail, manufacturing and food service industries to reduce the sodium content of packaged foods by an average 25% of the next five years. To establish the best way to do this, AWASH is consulting with key players in food companies and industry organisations in Australia to develop a food industry strategy to reduce salt in processed foods and salt use by the catering industry over the next five years.

To monitor changes over time, AWASH is developing a comprehensive database on salt levels in foods. It will be publishing a comparison of the changes in salt levels between 2007 and 2008 early next year. In the meantime, this is the second in a series of reports revealing salt levels across different food products that will be produced over the next few years to highlight the food categories contributing high levels of salt to the diet, as well as food categories that have made progress in salt reduction.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The primary aim of this particular project was to determine the salt content of some foods commonly eaten by, or marketed to, children. This was to highlight how easy it is to over consume salt. Bread, meat products, sauces, cheese and fast food are all food categories that contribute substantial amounts of salt to the Australian diet. The sodium values of products within the categories listed above were extracted from the AWASH sodium database or from company web-sites. The range of sodium for each type of food was then determined.

Typical meals using these foods were then constructed, with the amounts of salt in each meal being compared to recommended salt intakes.

MAIN FINDINGS

For individual food products, the sodium content of 99 breakfast cereals, 43 white bread products, 42 processed ham products, 44 sausage products, six beef burger products, 47 processed cheeses, eight barbecue sauce products and 17 tomato sauce products were reported (table 2).

For the analysis of fast food products, the salt content of products in children's meals from six major fast food restaurants (table 3) and two take-away pizza chains (table 4) was reported.

Table 1: Recommended sodium intakes for children and actual intakes for boys

Age	AI for sodium (mg/day)	Recommended Upper Daily Limit (mg sodium)	Actual intake of sodium (mg/day)	Percentage of the Upper Daily Limit
1–3 yr	200-400	1000	1691	169
4–8 yr	300-600	1400	2229	159
9–13 yr	400-800	2000	2890	145
14–16 yr	460-920	2300	3672	160

Table 1 outlines the Adequate Intake and Recommended Upper Daily Limit values for sodium for boys and girls aged 1-16yrs, as determined by the National Health and Medical Research Council, as well as the actual sodium intake values as found by the 2007 Australian National Children’s Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey. It should also be noted that the NHMRC has set a Suggested Dietary Target for chronic disease prevention for adults of 4 grams of salt (1600mg sodium) per day. This value was used throughout this report.

The table shows that in all age groups, boys are consuming sodium in amounts that greatly exceed both the Adequate Intake and the Upper Limit.

Table 2: Range of sodium contents of various foods

Food	No products compared	Range of sodium content (mg/100g)
Breakfast cereal	99	1-1063
White bread	43	420-665
Ham	42	427-1720
Sausages	44	404-2157
Beef burgers	6	572-740
Processed cheese	47	371-1857
Barbecue sauce	8	550-2140
Tomato sauce	17	355-1270

Table 2 shows the range of sodium found in a number of commonly eaten foods. All foods in the table have a wide range of sodium contents, indicating that there is room for sodium reduction in many of these products.

Table 3: Sodium content of children’s fast food meals

Fast food outlet	Portion size (g)	Sodium mg/portion	Salt g/portion	% intake of 4g SDT	% UL for 4-8yrs	%UL for 9-13yrs	%UL for 14-16yrs
McDonald’s	561	1212	3.031	76	87	61	51
KFC	318	1367	3.417	85	98	68	57
Subway	183	976	2.44	61	70	49	41
Oporto	240	1051	2.628	66	75	53	44
Hungry Jacks	489	1169	2.923	73	84	58	49
Red Rooster	275	1268	3.17	79	91	63	53
Average	344	1174	2.935	73	84	59	49

Table 3 shows the sodium content of different children’s meals and the contribution these meals can make to daily sodium intakes. On average, children’s fast food meals provided between 49% and 73% of the recommended upper level of intake of sodium for children aged between 4-16yrs.

Table 4: Sodium content of pizza from two leading take-away chains; values for individual pizza slices

Fast food outlet	Portion size (g)	Sodium mg/portion	Salt g/portion	% intake of 4g SDT	% UL for 4-8yrs	%UL for 9-13yrs	%UL for 14-16yrs
Pizza Hut Hawaiian	88	516	1.29	32	37	26	22
Pizza Hut Supreme	94	490	1.225	31	35	25	20
Pizza Hut cheese	85	357	0.893	22	26	18	15
Dominoes Hawaiian	83	410	1.025	26	29	21	17
Dominoes Supreme	84	407	1.018	25	29	20	17
Dominoes cheese	76	296	0.74	19	21	15	12
Average	85	413	1.032	26	29	21	17

Table 4 shows how just one slice of pizza can provide a quarter of the Suggested Dietary Target for sodium.

Table 5: Sodium content of pizza from two leading take-away chains; values for whole pizzas

Fast food outlet	Pizza size (g)	Sodium mg/100g	Sodium mg/pizza	Salt g/100g	Salt g/pizza	% intake of 4g SDT	% UL for 4-8yrs	%UL for 9-13yrs	%UL for 14-16yrs
Pizza Hut Hawaiian	704	586	4128	1.465	10.32	258	295	206	179
Pizza Hut Supreme	752	461	3920	1.153	9.8	245	280	196	170
Pizza Hut cheese	680	420	2856	1.05	7.14	179	204	143	124
Dominoes Hawaiian	664	496	3280	1.24	8.2	205	234	164	143
Dominoes Supreme	672	484	3256	1.21	8.14	204	233	163	142
Dominoes cheese	608	389	2368	0.973	5.92	148	169	118	103
Average	680	473	3301	1.182	8.253	206	236	165	144

Table 5 shows that a whole pizza can provide more than double the Suggested Dietary Target amount for sodium. As young boys are likely to consume more than the standard one slice 'portion', these findings highlight just how much salt could be consumed in a single meal.