

# DROP THE SALT!

## Salt and Men's Health

### AWASH Key Findings Report March 2011

This document was prepared by researchers at The George Institute for Global Health

For further information please contact

**Elizabeth Dunford**

PO Box M201

Missenden Rd

Camperdown NSW, 2050

Australia

**Phone:** + 61 2 8507 2529

**Fax:** + 61 2 9993 4502

**Email:** [edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au)



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE  
*for International Health*

[www.awash.org.au](http://www.awash.org.au)  
[www.thegeorgeinstitute.org](http://www.thegeorgeinstitute.org)

## **BACKGROUND**

Each year World Action on Salt and Health coordinates World Salt Awareness Week to increase understanding of the harmful effects of salt on health. The theme for this year’s Salt Awareness Week (March 21<sup>st</sup>-27<sup>th</sup>) is *Salt and Men’s Health*. The average Australian man consumes salt far in excess of the Government’s recommended maximum intake of 6 grams a day. And very few consume the lower Suggested Dietary Target (SDT) of 4 grams a day, advised for the maintenance of good health.

Excess salt consumed throughout life causes blood pressure to rise with age such that the majority of older people are hypertensive. High blood pressure is a leading cause of strokes and heart attacks which are the most common causes of death and illness in Australian men. Men generally have higher blood pressure levels than women, and this is particularly so at a younger age. Men are also less likely to have their blood pressure measured and are less likely to take action to reduce it when it is raised.

The good news is that reducing the salt you eat can reverse these risks. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) Drop the Salt! campaign was launched in May 2007. The campaign aims to improve the health of the Australian population by delivering a gradual reduction in dietary salt that will reduce cardiovascular diseases and other salt-related health problems. AWASH set out 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.

Salt levels naturally occurring in foods are very low but industry adds huge amounts of salt during the manufacturing process. As a consequence, for most Australians, more than three quarters of the salt they eat comes from processed or fast foods. In our society these foods are often very cheap and easily accessible making it very easy to eat too much salt. Some forward looking companies are already implementing programs to reduce the salt content of their products. But, many of the foods in supermarkets, canteens, worksite restaurants and schools still have very high salt levels.

A key objective of the AWASH strategy is to work with the food ingredient, food retail, and food service sectors to reduce the sodium content of processed foods and the target is to achieve an average 25% over five years. AWASH is working closely with a number of major Australian corporations to achieve this objective.

In addition, there is an urgent need to raise awareness of the dangers of a high-salt diet and provide information about how to make healthier food choices. This report highlights the salt levels in a selection of foods eaten by young men and gives advice about how to make healthier choices by using examples of popular foods.

## **PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODS**

The primary objective of this project was to report on the sodium content of a selection of popular foods and meals consumed by Australian men. The report is designed to illustrate how commonly eaten foods can contribute to high levels of salt in the diet, but also how salt intake can be dramatically reduced by making better choices.

The George Institute’s 2010 Food Composition Database was used to identify the brands with the highest and lowest levels of sodium for a selection of different food items.<sup>1</sup> The sodium data per 100g was used to calculate the quantity of sodium in a serve of each product and then multiplied by 2.5 to convert the sodium value into salt. The same serving size was used for each product to enable a fair comparison. The amount of salt “saved” per serve was calculated by subtracting the amount of salt in the lower salt product from the amount of salt in the higher salt product. The “percent less salt” in the healthier option was calculated by subtracting the amount of salt in the lower salt option from the amount of salt in the high salt option and dividing the result through by the amount of salt in the higher salt option.

Finally, FoodWorks recipe software was used to show how much salt could be avoided by preparing selected dishes at home from fresh ingredients rather than using pre-prepared products. To make the estimates for the recipes we used FoodWorks which derives generic data from NUTTAB2006. The salt in the branded processed food products was derived from the 2010 version of The George Institute’s Food Composition Database.

---

<sup>1</sup> The sodium values for branded food products used in this project were extracted from The George Institute’s 2010 food composition database. Any changes that may have been made to product formulation since 2010 are not reflected in the values in this report.

## MAIN FINDINGS

Many foods commonly eaten by men have very high levels of salt. By swapping to healthier options both in and out of the home, men could reduce their salt intake by a large amount. Switching to less salty products would translate into significant health gains.

### Take-away foods

Switching to a different brand of pizza or choosing a healthier burger could make a huge difference in terms of salt levels:

- 5 g of salt could be saved by swapping 5 slices of BBQ Meat Lovers Pizza from *Pizza Hut* for the equivalent amount of *Domino’s* BBQ Chicken and Mushroom Ciabatta Pizza
- 3 g salt could be saved by swapping *Hungry Jack’s* Ultimate Double Angus Burger for a *McDonald’s* Grand Angus Burger

### Pies and sausage rolls

- *Sargents* Premium Chunky Chicken Supreme Pie has 1.4 g less salt per pie compared to a *Four’N Twenty* Chicken and Vegetable Pie
- *Sargents* Grain Fed Beef Pies are 51% less salty than *Big Ben’s* Extra Tasty Meat Pies

### Breakfast cereal

Some breakfast cereals contain much more salt than different brands of a similar product:

- *Freedom Foods* Low Salt Corn Flakes are 83% less salty than *Woolworths Home Brand* Corn Flakes
- *Uncle Toby’s* Vitabrits have 20 times as much salt as *Sanitarium’s* Weet-Bix lite
- *Kellogg’s* Sultana Bran Buds are 60% less salty than *Golden Vale’s* Bran and Sultana cereal
- *Coles* Apricot, Date and Almond Muesli is 86% less salty than *Healtheries* Bircher Apple and Raisin Muesli

### Foods prepared at home

- Salt levels could be halved for a ham and cheese sandwich or sausage sandwich by swapping higher salt products for lower salt equivalents
- Swapping to lower salt brands for baked beans on toast could save 2.0 g salt
- Up to 2 g of salt could be saved by selecting a lower salt brand of some ready meals; *McCain’s* Bangers and Mash had more than twice the salt content of *Emily’s Kitchen* Angus Bangers and Mash

### Soups and sauces

- There was 2.4 g more salt in *Leggo’s* Sundried Tomato and Garlic Pasta Sauce compared to *Raguletto’s* Reduced Salt Napolitana Sauce
- Almost 3 g of salt could be saved by making your own tomato-based pasta sauce at home rather than buying it in the supermarket

### Snackfoods:

- *Red Rock Deli* Sea Salt & Balsamic Vinegar Chips are 50% less salty than *Samboy’s* Salt & Vinegar Crinkle Cut Chips
- *Home Brand* Original Salted Thin Cut Potato Chips are 73% less salty than *Sprinters* Original Crinkle Cut Potato Chips

Table 1 Commonly eaten food items and salt saved by selecting lower salt options

	High salt option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Lower salt option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Difference
<b>Take away pizza</b>	<b>Pizza Hut</b> 5 slices (310g) of Thin 'n Crispy BBQ Meat Lovers (890mg/100g)	6.9 g	<b>Domino’s</b> Whole (289g) BBQ Chicken and Mushroom Ciabatta (267mg/100g)	1.9 g	<b>5.0 g less salt and 72% less salty</b>
<b>Burgers</b>	<b>Hungry Jack’s</b> Ultimate Double Angus weighing in at 302g (770mg/100g)	5.8 g	<b>McDonald’s</b> Grand Angus weighing in at 264g (431mg/100g)	2.8 g	<b>3.0 g less salt and 52% less salty</b>
<b>Pizza – frozen (250g – 4 slices)</b>	<b>Weight Watchers</b> Hawaiian Pizza (555mg/100g)	3.5 g	<b>Coles Smart Buy</b> Hawaiian Pizza (270mg/100g)	1.7 g	<b>1.8 g less salt and 51% less salty</b>
<b>Corn Flakes (30g)</b>	<b>Woolworth’s Home Brand</b> Corn Flakes (780mg/100g)	0.6 g	<b>Freedom Foods</b> Low Salt Corn Flakes (120mg/100g)	>0.1 g	<b>0.5 g less salt and 83% less salty</b>
<b>Bran with fruit (45g)</b>	<b>Golden Vale</b> Bran and Sultanas (400mg/100g)	0.5 g	<b>Kellogg’s</b> Sultana Bran Buds (135mg/100g)	0.2 g	<b>0.3 g less salt and 60% less salty</b>
<b>Muesli (50g)</b>	<b>Healtheries</b> Bircher Apple and Raisin Muesli (540mg/100g)	0.7 g	<b>Coles</b> Apricot, Date and Almond Muesli (6mg/100g)	>0.1 g	<b>0.6 g less salt and 86% less salty</b>
<b>Weet-Bix (30g)</b>	<b>Uncle Tobys</b> Vitabrits (400mg/100g)	0.3 g	<b>Sanitarium</b> Weet-Bix Lite (20mg/100g)	>0.1 g	<b>0.2 g less salt and 67% less salty</b>

Table 1 (cont) Commonly eaten food items and salt saved by selecting lower salt options

	High salt option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Lower salt option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Difference
<b>Chicken Pies (175g)</b>	<b>Four ‘N Twenty</b> Chicken and Vegetable Pie (557mg/100g)	2.4 g	<b>Sargents</b> Premium Chunky Chicken Supreme Pie (230mg/100g)	1.0 g	<b>1.4 g less salt</b> and <b>58% less salty</b>
<b>Beef Pies (175g)</b>	<b>Big Ben</b> Extra Tasty Meat Pie (575mg/100g)	2.5 g	<b>Sargents</b> Grain Fed Beef Pies (284mg/100g)	1.2 g	<b>1.3 g less salt</b> and <b>51% less salty</b>
<b>Sausage Rolls (50g)</b>	<b>Franklins</b> Party Sausage Rolls (963mg/100g)	1.2 g	<b>Herbert Adams</b> Party Sausage Rolls (561mg/100g)	0.7 g	<b>0.5 g less salt</b> and <b>42% less salty</b>
<b>Ready meals – lasagne (350g)</b>	<b>Black &amp; Gold</b> Frozen Beef Lasagne (371mg/100g)	3.2 g	<b>Woolworths</b> Traditional Beef Lasagne (180mg/100g)	1.6 g	<b>1.6 g less salt</b> and <b>50% less salty</b>
<b>Ready meals – Bangers and Mash (400g)</b>	<b>McCain</b> Bangers & Mash (380mg/100g)	3.8 g	<b>Emily’s Kitchen</b> Angus Bangers & Mash (176mg/100g)	1.8 g	<b>2.0 g less salt</b> and <b>53% less salty</b>
<b>Baked beans (220g)</b>	<b>Heinz</b> Beans BBQ (490mg/100g)	2.7 g	<b>SPC</b> Baked Beans Salt Reduced (170mg/100g)	0.9 g	<b>1.8 g less salt</b> and <b>67% less salty</b>
<b>White bread (65g)</b>	<b>Bakers Delight</b> White Farmers Loaf (583mg/100g)	0.9 g	<b>Home Brand</b> White Toast Sliced Bread (383mg/100g)	0.6 g	<b>0.3 g less salt</b> and <b>33% less salty</b>
<b>Sliced cheese (25g)</b>	<b>Kraft</b> Cheddar Sandwich Slices (1736mg/100g)	1.1 g	<b>Mainland</b> Light Cheddar Cheese (511mg/100g)	0.3 g	<b>0.8 g less salt</b> and <b>73% less salty</b>

Table 1 (cont) Commonly eaten food items and salt saved by selecting lower salt options

	High salt option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Lower salt option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Difference
<b>Sliced ham (50g)</b>	<b>Hans</b> Fine Sliced 97% FF Honey Roasted Ham (1790mg/100g)	2.2 g	<b>Primo</b> Fine Carved Leg Ham Sliced (720mg/100g)	0.9 g	<b>1.3 g less salt and 60% less salty</b>
<b>Tomato sauce (20g)</b>	<b>Heinz</b> Tomato Ketchup (1350mg/100g)	0.7 g	<b>Masterfoods</b> Tomato Sauce Salt Reduced (598mg/100g)	0.3 g	<b>0.4 g less salt and 57% less salty</b>
<b>Pasta sauce (125g)</b>	<b>Leggo’s</b> Sundried Tomato and Garlic Pasta Sauce (890mg/100g)	2.8 g	<b>Raguletto</b> Napolitana Salt Reduced Pasta Sauce (120mg/100g)	0.4 g	<b>2.4 g less salt and 86% less salty</b>
<b>Potato Crisps (50g)</b>	<b>Sprinters</b> Original Flavoured Potato Chips Crinkle Cut (848mg/100g)	1.1 g	<b>Woolworth’s Home Brand</b> Original Salted Thin Cut Potato Chips (241mg/100g)	0.3 g	<b>0.8 g less salt and 73% less salty</b>
<b>Salt &amp; Vinegar Potato Crisps (50g)</b>	<b>Samboy</b> Salt and Vinegar Crinkle Cut Potato Chips (1410mg/100g)	1.8 g	<b>Red Rock Deli</b> Sea Salt and Balsamic Vinegar Potato Chips (757mg/100g)	0.9 g	<b>0.9 g less salt and 50% less salty</b>
<b>Beef and vegetable soup (250g)</b>	<b>Campbell’s</b> Vegetable Beef Soup (357mg/100g)	2.2 g	<b>Heinz</b> Very Special Beef, Wine and Vegetable Soup (210mg/100g)	1.3 g	<b>0.9 g less salt and 41% less salty</b>
<b>Beef sausages (70g)</b>	<b>Coles Butcher</b> Thin BBQ Sausages (868mg/100g)	1.5 g	<b>Woolworths</b> Heart Smart Aussie Beef Sausages (269mg/100g)	0.5 g	<b>1.0 g less salt and 67% less salty</b>

**Table 2: Ham and Cheese Sandwich: salt saved by swapping higher salt ingredients for lower salt ingredients**

Choice	Salt in a serve	% of SDT (4 g)	Recipe
Higher salt choice	4.9 g	122%	<b>Bakers Delight</b> White Farmers Loaf (65 g), <b>Kraft</b> Cheddar Sandwich slices (25 g), <b>Hans</b> Fine sliced 97% Fat Free Honey Roasted Ham (50 g), <b>Heinz</b> Tomato Ketchup (20 g)
Lower salt choice	2.1 g	53%	<b>Woolworth’s Home Brand</b> White Toast Sliced Bread (65 g), <b>Mainland</b> Light Cheddar Cheese (25 g), <b>Primo</b> Fine Carved Leg Ham Sliced (50 g), <b>Masterfoods</b> Tomato Sauce Reduced Salt (20 g)

**Swap and save 2.8 grams of salt (1120 mg sodium)**

**Table 3: Sausage Sizzle Sandwich: salt saved by swapping higher salt ingredients for lower salt ingredients**

Choice	Salt in a serve	% SDT (4 g)	Recipe
Higher salt choice	3.1 g	78%	<b>Bakers Delight</b> White Farmers Loaf (65 g), <b>Coles</b> Butcher Thin BBQ Sausages (70 g), <b>Heinz</b> Tomato Ketchup (20 g)
Lower salt choice	1.4 g	35%	<b>Home Brand</b> White Toast Sliced Bread (65 g), <b>Woolworths</b> Heart Smart Aussie Beef Sausages (70 g), <b>Masterfoods</b> Tomato Sauce Reduced Salt (20 g)

**Swap and save 1.7 grams of salt (680 mg sodium)**

**Table 4: Baked Beans on toast: salt saved by swapping higher salt ingredients for lower salt ingredients**

Choice	Salt in a serve	% SDT (4 g)	Recipe
Higher salt choice	3.6 g	90%	<b>Bakers Delight</b> White Farmers Loaf (65 g), <b>Heinz</b> Baked Beans BBQ (220 g)
Lower salt choice	1.6 g	40%	<b>Woolworth’s Home Brand</b> White Toast Sliced Bread (65 g), <b>SPC</b> Baked Beans Salt Reduced (220 g)

**Swap and save 2.0 grams of salt (800 mg sodium)**

**Table 5: Cook your own: salt saved by swapping home cooked for supermarket products**

	High salt supermarket option (sodium content)	Salt in a serve	Lower salt home cooked option (sodium content)*	Salt in a serve	Difference
<b>Tomato Pasta Sauce (125 g)</b>	<b>Leggo’s</b> Sundried Tomato and Garlic Pasta Sauce (890mg/100g)	2.8 g	<b>Tomato Pasta sauce</b> (20mg/100g)	<0.1 g	<b>2.7 g less salt and 96% less salty</b>
<b>Burgers (300 g)</b>	<b>Hungry Jack’s</b> Double Whopper (285mg/100g)	2.1 g	<b>Beef Burger</b> (with bread and sauce) (98mg/100g)	0.7 g	<b>1.4 g less salt and 67% less salty</b>
<b>Ready meals Meat dish (350 g)</b>	<b>Black &amp; Gold</b> Frozen Beef Lasagne (371mg/100g)	3.2 g	<b>Meatballs</b> (with tomato pasta sauce) (71mg/100g)	0.6 g	<b>2.6 g less salt and 80% less salty</b>

\*estimates made by formulating recipes in FoodWorks