

High salt diets seriously damaging sex lives of Australian men

Media release

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Getting across to men just how bad salt is for their health is the focus of a debate being hosted by The George Institute for Global Health in Sydney today as part of World Salt Awareness Week.

Whilst the adverse affects of high blood pressure on men's sex lives is clear, the direct link between salt and sex is yet to be proven. There is, however, a huge body of evidence showing that salt is the main cause of high blood pressure which kills thousands of Australian men each year - mostly through premature strokes, heart attacks and heart failure. Excess salt is also implicated in a range of other serious illnesses including stomach cancer, kidney disease, osteoporosis and asthma.

Professor Bruce Neal, Senior Director at The George Institute and Chairman of the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) will open the event by presenting the findings of new research on salt levels in foods commonly eaten by Australian men. New salt targets for the food industry will also be launched on the day. Said Prof Neal, "Whilst we won't present definitive new evidence linking salt and sex, we are serious about getting the salt message across to men. Men die younger and need to drastically reduce the amount of salt they eat. But the food industry needs to play its part too."

He added, "Our latest work reveals the shockingly high levels of salt that are hidden in the processed foods and meals that men are eating every day. Whilst many companies have been reducing salt levels in foods, and the government's Food and Health Dialogue has set salt targets for bread and breakfast cereals, a greater effort is needed to ensure salt intakes in Australia can be reduced much more quickly. That's why we have today announced 85 new salt targets for foods. This will give industry the direction they have been asking for. We will be working closely with companies to help them reduce salt in line with these interim targets in support of ongoing Food and Health Dialogue discussions.

Around 100 delegates will attend the debate which will be chaired by Dr Stan Goldstein Chief Medical Advisor of Bupa Australia. Panel members will include Andrew Giles from the Garvan Research Foundation, Daniel Williams from Men's Health Magazine, Sue Radd from the Nutrition and Wellbeing Clinic and Jodie McHenry from the Dietitians Association of Australia.

Said Dr Goldstein, "Bupa Australia communicates crucial health information to the public and to its members every day. Young men (and women) are eating too much salt, developing habits that can unknowingly hit them hard over time - there is clear evidence that this is resulting in premature death and disease. Getting the message across, especially to men, that they need to reduce their salt intake should be a priority for government and health organisations."

World Salt Awareness Week runs from March 21st – 27th this year and the theme is Salt and Men's Health. Other events being organised by AWASH as part of the week include a low salt cooking class and the launch of a new project to assess salt intake in Lithgow, New South Wales. A range of informative materials are also available.

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Notes to editors:

1. This press release has been issued by the AWASH Secretariat, which coordinates the day-to-day activities of AWASH and takes final responsibility for all outputs from AWASH. The Secretariat is informed by an Advisory Group which comprises a larger group of individuals with expertise in a range of different areas pertinent to the activities of AWASH.
2. **Event Details:** Salt and Men's Health event: 9am - 12noon (followed by lunch), 23 March 2011 at The George Institute for Global Health, Level 7, 341 George St, Sydney NSW 2000.
1. **Interviews:** Professor Bruce Neal, Director at The George Institute, and Jacqui Webster, Senior Project Manager, will be available for interviews on 23 March 2011, from 6am onwards.
2. Please contact Lizzy Dunford on edunford@georgeinstitute.org.au if you would like a copy of the full report on Salt and Men's Health.
3. This event is being organised as part of World Salt Awareness Week which is coordinated by World Action on Salt and Health. For further information see: <http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/awareness/intro.htm>
4. To coincide with Salt Awareness Week, Sue Radd and her team at the Nutrition and Wellbeing Clinic will be hosting a Unique Cookshop Event on Tuesday the 22nd March. For more information or to make a booking go to www.sueradd.com/cooking/cookshops.html.
5. As part of World Salt Awareness Week Lithgow City Council (in partnership with The George Institute and NSW Health) will also be hosting a Business Leaders Forum in Lithgow on Thursday 24th March. Prof Bruce Neal will launch Drop the Salt! Lithgow; the next component of The George Institute's NHMRC funded project to measure how much salt Australians are eating.
6. AWASH is a growing network of individuals and organisations concerned with salt and its effects on health. The mission of AWASH is to improve the health of Australians by achieving a gradual population-wide reduction in dietary salt consumption that will reduce cardiovascular diseases and other salt-related health problems. Visit www.awash.org.au for more information and for a full list of our advisors and supporters.