

WHAT IS AWASH?

World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) was established in 2005 and has 360 members in 77 countries. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) is a growing network of professional and health organisations that recognise the important health benefits of reducing people's salt intakes.

DROP THE SALT! CAMPAIGN

The Drop the Salt! campaign, launched in May 2007, is the first cohesive national salt reduction effort in Australia. The five year campaign will unite organisations in a commitment to act to reduce salt intake in the Australian population.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES



SALT AND EATING OUT

An important strand of the AWASH Drop the Salt! campaign is working in collaboration with the food ingredient, processing, retail and catering industries. Food manufacturers, restaurants and cafes, contract caterers and fast food companies all have important roles in reducing the salt content of their products or meals. In addition, state governments should stipulate maximum salt levels for foods served in institutions such as schools, hospitals, leisure centres and the workplace. In this way consumers can play their part by making the right food choices whilst eating out.

HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED?

The success of the Drop the Salt! campaign depends on widespread support from consumers, industry, government and other interested groups. The aims and objectives of the campaign are already supported by many individuals and national institutions. If you would like to know more about salt in food, AWASH, or how you can get involved with the Drop the Salt! campaign, please contact the:

AWASH Secretariat

The George Institute for International Health

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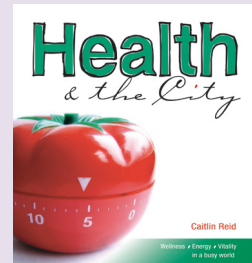
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Or visit our website at www.awash.org.au

HEALTH & THE CITY

Some of this information is extracted from the forthcoming book, *Health & the City* (Longueville Books, April 2009) by Caitlin Reid. *Health & the City* gives you simple tips to incorporate healthy practices to your daily routines – you'll barely even notice the effort, but you will notice your fitness and health improving.



'Caitlin Reid's genuine passion and thoughtfulness shines through in her book [and is] supported by fantastic health and fitness tips.' – Michele Bridges, Celebrity Personal Trainer, The Biggest Loser.

About the Author

Caitlin Reid is a consultant dietitian, exercise physiologist and health coach. She is a contributor to the Australian Healthy Food Guide, and consultant to Catherine Saxelby's Foodwatch and Good Health Solutions.

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THE GEORGE
INSTITUTE
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AWASH
Australian Division
of World Action on Salt & Health



SALT AND THE CITY

DROP THE SALT!

SALT AND HEALTH

While many of us scrutinise the fat and sugar content of the food we eat, few of us spare a thought for the salt content and the impact it's having on our body and health. Shockingly, at least six million Australians suffer as a result of eating too much salt. Excess salt consumed throughout life causes blood pressure to rise with age. High blood pressure is a leading cause of stroke and heart attacks – two of the most common causes of death and illness in Australia. Salt has also been implicated in a number of other major health problems including osteoporosis and stomach cancer.

THE BENEFITS OF LOWERING SALT

People only need very small amounts of salt to be healthy and most Australians are eating much more salt than they need. Reducing dietary salt intake would lower blood pressure and improve health for most people. Even healthy people with normal blood pressure stand to gain significant long-term benefits from cutting salt out of their diets.

HIDDEN SALT IN OUR DIET

Around 75% of the salt we eat comes from processed foods. Many people in Australia are aware they shouldn't be eating too much salt and have stopped adding salt while cooking or at the table. However, common foods such as bread, cereals, processed meat products and pre-prepared meals can have very high levels of 'hidden' salt.

SALT AND THE CITY

An increasing proportion of food is now eaten outside of the home, in cafes or restaurants, at workplace lunch meetings or as take-away food eaten on the move. Much of this food will not be labelled for its nutrition content so it is difficult for people to know just how much salt they are consuming. As well as checking the label for salt content and choosing low salt foods when doing the weekly shop, it is important that people make an effort to reduce salt in their diets when eating away from home.

HOW MUCH SALT SHOULD YOU EAT?

The NHMRC Suggested Dietary Target for Australian adults is 1,600mg sodium (4g salt). The table below shows the recommended Upper Limits for adults and children.

Age	Recommended upper daily limit (g salt)
1–3 yr	2.5
4–8 yr	3.5
9–13 yr	5
14–18 yr	5.75
Adults	6

UNDERSTANDING THE SALT CONTENT ON FOOD LABELS

Reading the food label will reveal how much salt a food contains. Looking at the ingredients list will tell you whether salt has been added to the product, while the Nutrition Information Panel (NIP) will tell you how much salt is present. Salt is labelled

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
SERVINGS PER BAG: 7 SERVING SIZE: 25g		
Ave Quantity Per:	25g Serve	100g
Energy	500kJ	2000kJ
Protein	3.3g	13.0g
Fat	5.4g	21.7g
-saturated	3.7g	14.7g
-trans	LESS THAN 0.1g	0.1g
-monounsaturated	1.0g	3.8g
-polyunsaturated	0.8g	3.1g
Carbohydrates	14.0g	56.0g
-sugars	0.2g	0.9g
Dietary Fibre	1.1g	4.4g
Sodium	195mg	780mg

as sodium in the NIP. For a food to be low in salt, it must have 120mg or less of sodium per 100g. Anything with over 500mg salt per 100g is a high salt food and should be eaten very sparingly.

SALT IN TAKE-AWAY AND SNACK FOODS

Whilst some big fast food companies now include nutrition information on their menus or websites, very often it is hard to know what the salt content of different products is. Here are some examples of the salt levels in foods typically eaten outside of the home:

	Salt (g/serve)
Burger	1.8-6.0
Sandwich	1.2-5.8
Kids fast food meal	2.1-3.2
Take-away fast food meal	3.0-7.8
Sushi	0.8-1.6
Salads	0.3-3.9
Pizza (1 whole)	8.1-10.3
Hot chips (1 serve)	0.4-3.0
Bacon & egg roll	1.5-3.6

HOW TO PINCH THE SALT FROM YOUR DIET

All of us can benefit from eating less salt by following these guidelines when eating out:

1. When ordering pizza, choose vegetable or chicken toppings instead of pepperoni, bacon, or extra cheese.
2. When buying ready-to-eat foods, compare products to find the one lowest in sodium using the per 100g column.
3. Limit fast foods such as burgers and pizza.
4. Keep healthy snacks such as dried fruit and nuts or fresh fruit at hand.
5. When dining out at a restaurant, ask for sauces and other condiments to be served on the side rather than on the meal.
6. Don't add salt to your food at the table when dining out.
7. Avoid ordering dishes that contain high salt ingredients including Asian sauces, cured meats and cheeses.
8. Don't be afraid to ask the restaurant or take-away food outlet about the salt content of their meals and ask them not to salt the fries!