

**DROP THE SALT!**

**AWASH Sausage Sizzle  
Key Findings  
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on Salt and Health

## **BACKGROUND**

Australians are currently consuming around nine grams of salt each day, well above the recommended six gram maximum for overall health.

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.

In order to monitor progress with salt reduction in the food industry, AWASH has set up a database recording the sodium contents of packaged foods on Australian supermarket shelves. Data was extracted from the 'eatingsafe' database and checked for accuracy. Additional data was retrieved from alternate sources where necessary. This database will be used to track changes in the sodium content of foods over time. Brands representing at least 70% of the market share within each food category (according to the Retail World's Australasian Grocery Guide 2008) are included in the AWASH sodium database. Therefore products within the AWASH sodium database will represent at least 70% of packaged food products sold in Australian supermarkets.

AWASH has collected information about the current range of sodium contents in various foods. It is intended that this information will be made available towards the end of this year. This is the first 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 foods traditionally consumed at a typical Australian sausage sizzle. This was to highlight just one example of how commonly eaten foods can contribute high levels of salt in the diet. Bread, meat products and sauces are three food categories that contribute substantial amounts of salt to the Australian diet.

The sodium values of white bread products, sausages, tomato sauce, barbecue sauce and beef burgers were extracted from the AWASH sodium database. The range of sodium for each type of food was then determined.

As there are currently no agreed acceptable levels for salt in different food products in Australia, targets set out by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in the UK were used in this project. The FSA is a world leader in salt reduction and has set salt targets for various processed food products. These targets were agreed upon by the food industry, with an aim to reduce the sodium content of foods to these target amounts by 2010. As similar targets are yet to be set in Australia, for the purpose of this project the FSA targets were used to examine whether Australian products were within acceptable sodium levels.

## MAIN FINDINGS

The sodium content of 43 white bread products, 44 sausage products, 17 tomato sauce products, eight barbecue sauce products, and six beef burger products were reported.

**Salt in white bread** Of 43 white bread products, the sodium content ranged from 420-665mg per 100g. Only 16% of products met the sodium target of 430mg per 100g set out by the FSA.

**Salt in sausages** Of 44 sausage and hotdog products, the sodium content ranged from 404-2157mg per 100g. Only 2% of products met the sodium target of 550mg per 100g set out by the FSA.

**Salt in tomato sauce** Of 17 tomato sauce products, the sodium content ranged from 355-1270mg per 100g. Only 47% met the sodium target of 1000mg per 100g set out by the FSA.

**Salt in barbecue sauce** Of eight barbecue sauce products, the sodium content ranged from 550-1160mg per 100g. Only 25% met the sodium target of 600mg per 100g set out by the FSA.

**Salt in beef burgers** Of six beef burger products, the sodium content ranged from 572-740mg per 100g. None of the products met the sodium target of 400mg per 100g set out by the FSA.

**Table 1: Range of sodium contents of various foods and percentage of products meeting FSA targets.**

Food	No products compared	Range of sodium content (mg/100g)	FSA final sodium target (mg/100g)	% meeting FSA final targets
White bread	43	420-665	430	16
Beef burgers	6	572-740	400	0
Sausages	44	404-2157	550	2
Barbecue sauce	8	550-2140	600	18
Tomato sauce	17	355-1270	1000	47

