

Media Release

Australian research tells us to Drop the salt!

17 July 2007

New research released by the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) shows most Australians know that the majority of salt comes from processed foods. However, few regularly read labels for salt content, and of those who do, few act on what they read.

Australians must recognise that salt is a major cause of high blood pressure, translating into increased risks of heart attacks and stroke. According to AWASH Chair, Dr Bruce Neal, Australians need to change their diet to reduce these risks. "Not nearly enough is being done to reduce salt in people's diets and Australians are consuming far too much. Most are eating well above the 6 grams per day recommended by the National Heart Foundation of Australia. "A reduction to 6 grams a day would prevent about one fifth of all strokes and heart attacks in Australia each year," he said.

AWASH aims to work with the Australian food industry to achieve a 25 % reduction in the salt content of processed food over the next five years. During this same period, AWASH will join with key consumer and health organisations, such as the Dietitians Association of Australia, to raise consumer awareness and encourage individuals to take positive steps to reduce their salt intake.

Accredited Practising Dietitian and spokesperson for the Dietitians Association of Australia, Denise Griffiths, says. "Individuals can make simple changes to their shopping list and cooking ingredients to considerably lower the amount of salt they might eat in a day."

Five easy steps for reducing salt, which will importantly improve your health without losing flavour in your food, are:

- Eat fresh foods including plenty of fruits and vegetables
- Compare the labels and select products with the lowest salt (sodium) content
- Go for no-added salt, reduced salt or low salt foods when available
- Use herbs and spices, lemon juice, garlic or mustard, rather than salt during cooking and at the table
- Avoid high salt take-away foods and when eating out in cafes and restaurants.

Denise Griffiths added, 'Further reducing the amount of salt in processed foods and encouraging Australians to read food labels will help people make healthier choices to meet their nutritional needs. People looking for individualised advice on how to eat less salt and still enjoy delicious, flavoursome foods are best to see an Accredited Practising Dietitian.'

'It is not well understood that almost everyone's health is being adversely affected by the salt they eat.' said Dr Bruce Neal. 'The Drop the Salt! Campaign is the first cohesive national salt reduction effort in Australia.'

ENDS

If you would like to interview a dietitian in your area or Dr Bruce Neal, please contact:

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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. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (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.
3. AWASH will be working to Drop the Salt! (name of their national campaign) by promoting the benefits of salt reduction and engaging the participation of all sectors of the Australian community - this will include industry, schools, consumers, scientists, healthcare workers, governments, regulatory bodies and professional organisations. Regular monitoring of progress towards the goal and careful scrutiny of the development of each strategy will be undertaken throughout the campaign.
4. WASH - In 2006, around 194 medical experts from 48 countries around the world joined together to launch WASH – World Action on Salt and Health – in a concerted effort to reduce dietary salt intake, in order to lower blood pressure globally. AWASH is building on the success of the UK campaign. Visit www.worldactiononsalt.com
5. The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Dietitians are experts in nutrition and a public guarantee of this expertise is provided through the Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) program – a national system for recognition of professionals who have the qualifications and expertise to provide expert nutrition and dietary advice. To find an APD visit the DAA website www.daa.asn.au and go to 'Find an APD' or call 1800 812 942.