

## **Concerns about salt and children revealed: Parents call for action during Salt Awareness Week**

**Media Release**  
**Embargo: 31 January 2008**

A consumer poll published today reveals parents' concerns about salt levels in children's foods, with 86% of parents calling for more action to be taken.

The results of the poll, commissioned by the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH), will be discussed today at an event being held as part of International Salt Awareness Week. Hosted by The George Institute for International Health, at the State Library of New South Wales, the event will bring together key players from the food industry, government and health to consider: *How can we protect our children against the harmful effects of eating too much salt?*

Recent research confirms that salt raises blood pressure in children, leading to hypertension in adults. Although the health problems associated with high blood pressure often don't appear until later in life, they are strongly influenced by childhood health\*. Parent of two, Shalani McCray said, "I want to make the best health choices for my children. Salt is added to so many foods and parents aren't aware of just how much salt is in children's food. I purchase low salt options in the supermarket and make most of my children's food from scratch, so I'm aware of how much salt is in their diet. It's hard to manage though."

AWASH Chair, Dr Bruce Neal, Senior Director at The George Institute said, "Parents in our poll reported that children are frequently eating salty snacks. Many of the staple foods eaten by Australian children also have a lot of salt in them. This can make it extremely difficult for parents to keep salt intakes at a healthy level."

AWASH, which coordinates the Drop the Salt! Campaign, wants to work with the Government to make salt reduction a national health priority. Salt reduction is an extremely cost-effective disease prevention strategy, according to Dr Neal "A comprehensive government strategy, including setting targets for salt levels in foods and raising awareness of the maximum recommended intake levels for children, is urgently required. If Australians reduced their salt intake to recommended levels, we would prevent about one fifth of all strokes and heart attacks in Australia each year."

Many key players support this initiative. The Australian food industry has already made good progress in reducing salt in food products and recognises that more can be done. Australian Food and Grocery Council (AFGC) CEO, Dick Wells said, "The AFGC supports raising awareness among consumers of the need to moderate their salt intake to 6g per day and the food industry is continually exploring ways to reformulate products to better meet the needs of consumers including providing lower salt options."

In Sydney for the event, Dame Deirdre Hutton, Chair of the UK Government's Food Standards Agency said, "We have made great strides in the UK by working closely with the food industry to encourage salt reductions across a wide range of everyday foods - in parallel with a multi-million pound social marketing campaign to raise consumer awareness." Deirdre Hutton will outline the UK strategy and discuss progress in achieving challenging government targets.

The Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) recommends a maximum upper level of 3.5g salt per day for 4-8 year olds, and 5g for 9-13 year olds. However, adding up the salt content of a typical child's meals and snacks for a day, shows it would be very easy to consume over twice this amount.

AWASH has been working with the food industry since May 2007 to achieve an overall reduction of salt content in processed foods by 25% over a five year period. Peter Tedesco, CEO of Lowan Whole Foods Australia said today, "We have made a conscious effort to reduce salt levels in our new children's cereal range, Lowan Kids, and have reformulated our popular children's cereal Honey O's, where we cut salt levels by over a third. Lowan has set a significant benchmark when it comes to salt reduction and encourages other food manufactures to consider similar initiatives."

Whilst many Australian companies have already made real improvements to the salt content of their products, more still needs to be done. The 'Drop the Salt!' campaign is the first cohesive national salt reduction effort in Australia. Throughout this five-year campaign, AWASH will work with a broad range of organisations in a commitment to reduce salt intake in the Australian population to 6 grams a day by 2012.

ENDS

**Event Details:**

Drop The Salt! Campaign Debate  
 9- 12noon (followed by lunch), 31 January 2008  
 The Dixon Room, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney  
[www.awash.org.au](http://www.awash.org.au)

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**Notes to editors:**

**Typical Children's Meal Summary**

<b>Breakfast</b>	<b>Salt grams per serve</b>
Rice Breakfast Cereal 30 g	0.54g
Toast 1 Slice White	0.52g
Dairy Spread 5 g	0.073g
Yeast Spread 5 g	0.043g
Orange juice 200 ml	<0.01g
<b>Snack</b>	
Packet of Corn Chips 46g	0.63g
<b>Packed Lunch</b>	
White Bread 2 slices	1.04g
Cheddar Cheese 21g	0.74g
Ham 1 Slice 16g	0.44g
Margarine 5g	0.07g
Apple 1	<0.01g
<b>Snack</b>	
Yoghurt 200g Tub Fruit	0.43g
<b>Dinner</b>	
Pasta with Cheese Sauce 52g	1.65g
Mixed Frozen Vegetables 100g	0.04g
<b>Total Dietary Sodium Intake</b>	<b>6.2g Salt</b>

Recommended Daily Intake for 4-8 years old = 300 – 1400 mg of sodium (3.5g Salt)

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](http://www.awash.org.au) for more information and for a full list of our advisors and supporters.
3. For a full **list of supporters**, visit: [http://www.awash.org.au/about\\_supporters.html](http://www.awash.org.au/about_supporters.html)
4. AWASH will be working to Drop the Salt! 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.
5. 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. [www.worldactiononsalt.com](http://www.worldactiononsalt.com)
6. \*References:  
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