

## **SALT WARNING ON SAUSAGE SIZZLES!**

**Media Release**  
**Embargo: Friday 11 JULY 2008**

Key findings released today by the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) show that only 2% of sausages in Australian supermarkets meet acceptable salt levels. AWASH revealed that one single sausage sandwich at your local barbecue could contain as much as 6 grams of salt; 100% of the maximum daily recommended amount for adults and almost double that recommended for children.

Eating too much salt is bad for health, raising blood pressure and greatly increasing the chances of suffering from heart disease or stroke.

The product overview shows that other products commonly eaten at barbecues, such as hamburger patties, tomato sauce and some white breads, are also high in salt. It shows huge variations in the salt content of different brands of similar products, with some sausages containing over three times as much salt as others.

These findings have been released to coincide with the launch of an AWASH strategy of working with the food industry to reduce salt in foods by 25% over five years. The strategy requires high level commitment from the food industry and the development of individual company action plans. AWASH is also inviting views on proposals for developing targets for salt levels for specific products and focusing on processed meats, bread and the fast food sector.

The Australian Food and Grocery Council supports the need to reduce population salt intakes to below 6 grams per day and many major food companies have already developed salt reduction plans in line with the AWASH strategy.

Dr Bruce Neal, Chairman of AWASH says: "While some food companies deserve credit for their efforts to reduce salt, a lot more still needs to be done. Major players such as Coles, Kellogg and Unilever have been reducing salt for some time, but there are still far too many high salt products on supermarket shelves."

"The food industry in Australia is committed to further action to reduce salt in foods. The Government now needs to make salt a national health priority and lead negotiations on maximum salt targets for different products. Only then will Australians have a chance of reducing their daily salt intake to recommended levels," says Dr Neal,

Salt is a leading cause of high blood pressure in most countries around the world, and high blood pressure causes more deaths than anything else.

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**Notes to editors:**

1. 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.
2. The AWASH Food Industry strategy is available on the web-site at [www.awash.org.au](http://www.awash.org.au) for comment by 30<sup>th</sup> September. AWASH will also be holding a series of meetings with key industry organizations to consult on the proposals.
3. 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 set of individuals with expertise in a range of different areas pertinent to the activities of AWASH.
4. Results from the AWASH research used in this release were derived from the 'eatingsafe' database. The 'eatingsafe' database contains up-to-date information about more than 13,000 individual food products on Australian supermarket shelves. For the purpose of this release, the sodium content of 44 sausage products, 93 bread products and 17 tomato sauce products were analysed.
5. The maximum sodium content of a sausage sandwich was derived by adding the highest sodium value per serve for white bread, sausages and tomato sauce from the eatingsafe database.
6. To convert grams of salt into grams of sodium, divide by 2.5. For example, 6 grams of salt is equivalent to 2.4 grams of sodium (or 2400mg).
7. The Food Standards Agency in the UK is a world leader in salt reduction and has set salt targets for processed foods. These targets were agreed upon by the food industry, with an aim to reduce the sodium content of foods to the target concentrations by 2010. AWASH is proposing that similar targets be set here in Australia. Australians are currently consuming around 9 grams of salt each day, well above the recommended 6 gram maximum for overall health.
8. The Recommended Upper Limits (UL) for sodium according to the Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand are as follows:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Recommended Upper Daily Limit (g salt)</b>
1–3 yr	2.5
4–8 yr	3.5
9–13 yr	5
14–18 yr	5.75
Men	6
Women	6