

Media Release

Serious Salt Score for Australian Boys

8 October 2008

New data published today by the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) explains the shocking salt intakes of Australian boys revealed in the 2007 Australian National Children's Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey, published at the weekend. The AWASH report demonstrates just how easy it is for teenage boys to eat too much salt, with most take-away kids-meals, pizzas, burgers and sausages containing more than half the suggested dietary target for adults.

The long-awaited government's Children's Survey revealed that that 14-16 year old boys are eating more than twice the suggested dietary target for salt each day. Furthermore boys and girls of all age groups are consuming amounts of salt far in excess of the government's recommended daily upper limits. Meanwhile less than 6% of boys in any age group eat the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables.

AWASH says the food industry must be held to account to reduce salt levels in foods and that government should fund an awareness campaign to encourage children to eat more fresh fruit and vegetables and less processed foods.

High salt intakes are one of the main causes of high blood pressure in Australia and high blood pressure is the biggest single cause of premature death and disability in the world. 'It is well established that the problems caused by salt start in childhood' said Professor Nowson, representing the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH). 'What wasn't appreciated until now, is just how much salt Australian children are eating'. She continued, 'Without immediate action we are condemning the next generation to serious health problems that could be easily averted. The government must take leadership on this. The status quo is simply not an option'.

The government has highlighted a number of preventative strategies targeting children's' health, most notably obesity prevention. These latest data suggest that salt reduction should feature much more prominently.

Ms Webster, AWASH Project Manager says: "It's hardly surprising that teenage boys are eating so much salt because salt levels in the types of foods they like to eat are so high. Bread, processed meat products and take away foods are the main culprits. One sausage sandwich can contain over the recommended daily maximum amount. Many pizzas contain more than twice the suggested daily target."

"There is simply no reason for many foods to be so salty", she continued. "The government needs to call the food industry to account by establishing clear targets for salt levels in foods and funding a comprehensive campaign to highlight the benefits of reducing salt intakes including by eating more fruit and vegetables and less processed foods".

The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health launched the 'Drop the Salt!' Campaign in May 2007 to reduce population salt intakes to less than 6grams per day, over five years. The three main objectives are working with the food industry to reduce salt in processed foods, raising consumer awareness and implementing clear labelling to highlight the salt content of foods.

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Notes to Editors:

1. The main findings from the Children's Diet and Physical Activity Survey can be found at: [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/66596E8FC68FD1A3CA2574D50027DB86/\\$File/childrens-nut-phys-survey.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/66596E8FC68FD1A3CA2574D50027DB86/$File/childrens-nut-phys-survey.pdf)
2. The NHMRC has established a Suggested Dietary Target for Chronic Disease Prevention of 4 grams of salt (1600mg sodium) per day for adults.
3. This press release has been issued by The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (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.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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
7. Graph showing actual sodium intakes of different age groups of boys compared to recommended upper limits. Data taken from the Children's Diet and Physical Activity Survey.

