

2012 DIETARY SODIUM IN CANADA FACT SHEET

Diets high in sodium (salt) are associated with a high burden of premature death and disability in Canada

- An estimated 2 million Canadians have hypertension caused by excess dietary sodium.
- 1 in 5 heart attacks and strokes are estimated to be caused by excess dietary sodium, amounting to 14,000 preventable Canadian deaths/year.
- Globally, excess dietary sodium is estimated to cause over 1.4 million deaths/year.
- Reductions in dietary sodium are predicted to prevent over 300 Canadians/day from developing hypertension.
- Hypertension is a leading preventable risk factor for heart disease (heart attack and heart failure), stroke, kidney failure and a major contributor to premature death, dementia, disability and health care costs in Canada.

Canadians consume too much sodium

- The recommended daily intake level of sodium for healthy adults between the ages of 9 and 50 is 1500 mg, and less for those older and younger.
- The tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL) is 2300 mg/day for those over age 13.
- Canadians consume an average of 3400mg of sodium per person/day, greatly exceeding both the recommended daily and upper intake levels.
- More than 9 in 10 Canadian children aged 4-8 eat more than the upper intake level recommended for health.
- Sodium intake in Canada largely comes from pre-packaged, processed and restaurant foods; only a small portion (1/10th) is naturally found in food and a similar amount (1/10th) is added in home cooking or at the table.

Reducing dietary sodium saves lives, health care resources and dollars

- For each year there is a delay in lowering dietary sodium to recommended levels, the impact is estimated to result in 14,000 Canadians dying of cardiovascular disease; 40,000 Canadians being hospitalized; 125,000 Canadians being newly diagnosed with hypertension; and over \$1.4 billion dollars in direct health care costs.

Lowering Dietary Sodium is an International Priority

- The United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) have publically acknowledged the need for governments to lead sodium reduction efforts as a means to prevent chronic disease, with the WHO coining sodium reduction strategies as one of the few 'best buys' in preventing premature death and disability.
- The Institute of Medicine (IOM) has **recommended that sodium intake be reduced by about 50%.**

2010 Sodium Work Group Report Key Policy Recommendations:

- **Reduction in sodium additives to foods in a highly structured carefully monitored environment is the critical intervention to reduce sodium intake**
- Reductions in **marketing foods to children** to reduce the impact of high dietary sodium in this vulnerable population.
- Improved **food labeling** to allow Canadians to easily understand the health implications of the sodium content, including changes to the nutrition facts table to have consistent serving sizes, utilize the adequate intake level of 1,500 mg daily intake and to mandate disclosure of nutrition information at restaurants.
- Standardized **food procurement** policies to ensure public buildings and funds are not used to buy and sell foods that are unhealthy.
- Independent publically accessible **monitoring and evaluation** of the sodium reduction program.

- In 2007, 18 Canadian health organizations endorsed a policy statement calling for government action to reduce sodium in the Canadian diet.
- In September 2010, the Federal, Provincial, Territorial (F/P/T) Ministers of Health adopted the sodium reduction goal of lowering the population average sodium intake of Canadians to 2,300 mg per day by 2016.

Sodium Standards and Guidelines in Canada need to be strengthened

- Voluntary approaches have not been effective in pressuring industry to reduce sodium in the food supply.
- If the food industry gradually reduced the amount of sodium in processed and prepared foods, public consumption of sodium could be reduced to safer, and recommended, levels.
- Regulatory limits are tools that the Government of Canada can use to meet established sodium targets and to ensure the food supply is safer for Canadians.

Commercial influence is jeopardizing public health efforts

- The commercial salt producing industry uses similar tactics to those used by the tobacco industry in attempting to undermine the public health effort to reduce dietary salt.
- The Salt Institute, sponsored by the salt industry with a small number of paid and unpaid consultants, position the evidence as controversial emphasizing a low salt versus normal salt diet. They further base their 'facts' on a few inconsistent studies.
- Several of the inconsistent studies that do not support the benefits of reducing dietary salt to normal levels were conducted by consultants of the Salt Institute and have since been refuted by independent scientists.

A new national coalition of health and scientific organizations has formed to provide evidence informed advice to reduce the burden of disease caused by hypertension allowing Canadians to live longer healthier lives with a more sustainable health care system. Membership of the Hypertension Advisory Committee includes:

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| ▪ Canadian Cardiovascular Society | ▪ Canadian Public Health Association |
| ▪ Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses | ▪ Canadian Society of Internal Medicine |
| ▪ Canadian Institute of Health Research | ▪ Canadian Stroke Network |
| ▪ College of Family Physicians of Canada | ▪ Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada |
| ▪ Canadian Medical Association | ▪ Hypertension Canada |
| ▪ Canadian National Specialty Society for Community Medicine | ▪ HSFC CIHR Chair in Hypertension Prevention and Control |
| ▪ Canadian Pharmacists Association | |