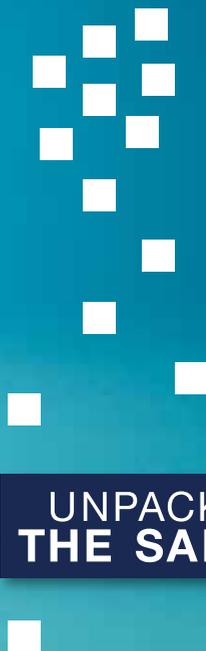


Reducing the **pressure** on our health and economy

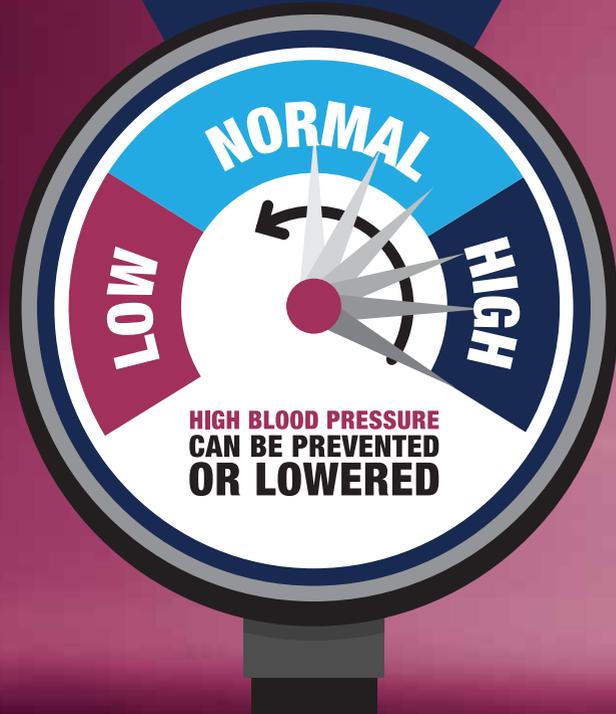
A call to action from
the Victorian Salt
Reduction Partnership



UNPACK
THE SALT

Australia has a hidden health problem

30% of Australian adults have high blood pressure³



It's a problem packed in the foods we eat every day.

Australians are consuming nearly double the recommended salt intake and it's hidden in processed and packaged foods.

Excess salt can increase the risk of high blood pressure, which is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

On average, one Australian dies as a result of cardiovascular disease every 12 minutes.¹ This places a huge economic burden on the healthcare system, which can be prevented.

The World Health Organization recognises the vital role of the food industry to reformulate food to contain less salt as a 'best buy' in (noncommunicable) disease prevention.²

A diet high in salt can...

Increase your risk of **stroke**, which can lead to death and long term disability

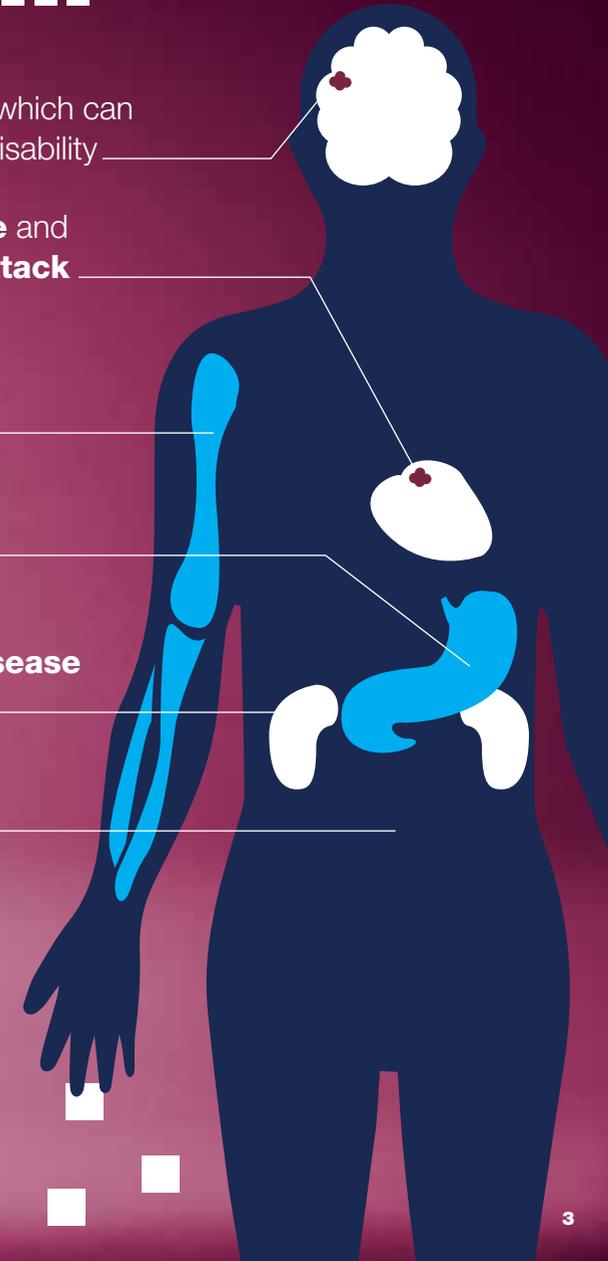
Cause **high blood pressure** and increase your risk of **heart attack**

Lead to greater calcium losses in urine, increasing the risk of **osteoporosis**

Increase your risk of **stomach cancer**

Cause stress on your kidneys which can lead to **kidney disease** and **kidney failure**

Cause water retention and make you **feel bloated**



The Victorian Salt Reduction Partnership

Was established in 2015, with the launch of the 'State of Salt'.⁴ Our joint action plan is to reduce salt intake in Victoria and Australia by gaining consensus and commitment for salt reduction action from government, the public and the food industry.

We are:

- ✓ Raising awareness that 75% of the salt in our diets comes from processed and packaged foods and providing tips to reduce salt intake.
- ✓ Encouraging the food industry to produce healthier foods and influencing the adoption of practices to reduce sodium in processed foods.
- ✓ Seeking engagement from the government.

Salt reduction strategies are 200 times more cost effective than high blood pressure medication.⁵

How can the **government** bring the **pressure down**?

Through the implementation of an **effective National Food and Nutrition Strategy** to reduce the amount of salt in processed and packaged foods.

This should include:

1 Set and monitor targets to reduce salt in identified food categories

2 Measure and monitor changes in population salt intake

3 Deliver a national healthy eating campaign, which includes a focus on the importance of reducing salt consumption



With the potential to save \$200 million each year, we need action now.

1) Set and monitor targets to reduce salt in identified food categories

The major sources of salt in the diet come from processed, packaged foods which include bread, cereal-based products, processed meats, cheese, crackers, salty snacks and sauces.^{6,7,8} Setting sodium reduction targets on foods that contribute significantly to salt intakes is an effective way to reduce average salt intakes at a population level.

Australia should develop a dedicated salt reduction program. This would support our commitment to the WHO salt reduction target, which calls for a 30% reduction in salt consumption by 2025. Australia has

already made some progress through the former Food and Health Dialogue voluntary salt targets for food categories. Further work is proposed as part of the current Healthy Food Partnership.

The United Kingdom now have one of the lowest salt intakes of any developed country, achieved through the **setting of progressive, time-bound salt targets to be achieved by the food industry, reinforced by strong Government leadership.** This work is supported by health organisations monitoring progress towards commitment. Since 2004, average

To be successful, the Federal Government should increase funding and support to the Healthy Food Partnership to establish, implement and monitor progress against salt reduction targets. This should be done as part of a broad multi-stakeholder National Food and Nutrition Strategy.

population salt intake in the UK has decreased by 15% from 9.5g per day to around 8.1g per day, estimated to prevent more than 9000 premature deaths and save £1.5 billion every year in health care and other costs. This is around 300 times more than the cost of running the salt reduction program.⁹

Salt reduction programs are being implemented all over the world. In 2015, The George Institute identified 75 countries with salt reduction programs.¹⁰ Countries that have reported population impacts include; China, Denmark, Finland, France, Iceland,

Ireland, Japan, South Korea, Lithuania, Slovenia, Turkey, and the UK. Reductions in mean population salt intake, range from 5% in France to 36% in Finland, spanning over varying time periods. These examples, except Finland, have used voluntary initiatives.

Importantly, engagement with the food industry, including the setting of salt targets, was identified as a key element of success in countries that reported an impact. These successes can be translated to an Australian context – where the majority of salt consumed is from processed foods.

2) Measure and monitor changes in population salt intake

To be successful, the Federal Government should fund regular (every 5 years) monitoring surveys and publicly report on the results.

In addition to monitoring progress against targets for salt levels in foods, it is important to monitor any changes in salt consumption. This will also serve the purpose of assessing whether Australia is meeting the World Health Organization's target of 30% reduction in average population salt intake by 2025. Conducting regular 24-hour urinary sodium excretion surveys as part of a national diet survey is recommended, as it is considered best practice for assessing salt intake.¹¹

Accurate monitoring is also particularly important as the Australian Government has recently reviewed the Nutrient Reference Values for sodium, and adjusted recommendations in line with the global 2000mg (<5g salt) target. This highlights ongoing recognition and provides an opportunity for Government to build its commitment and work to raise consumer and food manufacturer awareness of the importance of reducing salt in parallel with work to implement the reformulation targets.



3) Deliver a national healthy eating campaign, which includes a focus on the importance of reducing salt consumption

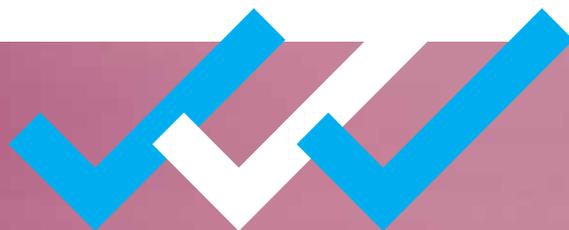
To be successful, the Federal and State and Territory Governments should inform and empower consumers to adopt a healthier diet including a reduced salt intake.

Health education combined with other complementary interventions has shown to have an impact on salt intake or knowledge about salt and health.¹²

This is why the Partnership is currently delivering the 'Unpack the Salt' campaign, to raise awareness that most of the salt we eat is hidden salt in processed foods. This builds on the successful 2016 'Don't Trust Your Tastebuds' campaign which resulted in significant changes in consumer

awareness and behaviour. Independent research undertaken following the campaign reported that approximately three quarters (73%) of those who were exposed to the campaign had taken at least one action to reduce salt as a result of seeing the advertisements.¹³

It is important to continue to empower the Australian community to understand the impact of excessive salt intake and the opportunities to reduce consumption.



For further information please contact
unpackthesalt@heartfoundation.org.au

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- (2) World Health Organization 2017, "Best buys' and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases: Tackling NCDs', Geneva.
- (3) ABS National Health Survey: first results, 2014-2015.
- (4) VicHealth 2015, 'The State of Salt: The case for salt reduction in Victoria. Supporting evidence document'.
- (5) The effectiveness and costs of population interventions to reduce salt consumption Background paper prepared by Bruce Neal with assistance from Wu Yangfeng and Nicole Li to the WHO Forum and Technical meeting on "Reducing Salt Intake in Populations" 5-7 October 2006 Paris, France.
- (6) James WP, Ralph A, Sanchez-Castillo CP. The dominance of salt in manufactured food in the sodium intake of affluent societies. Lancet (London, England). Feb 21 1987;1(8530):426-429.
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