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## Introduction from Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of WASH

*World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) was established in October 2005 with the aim of bringing about a gradual reduction in salt intake throughout the world. We encourage and support our expert members in different countries to promote salt reduction by setting up their own local campaigns.*

We hope you enjoy our newsletter.

Best wishes,



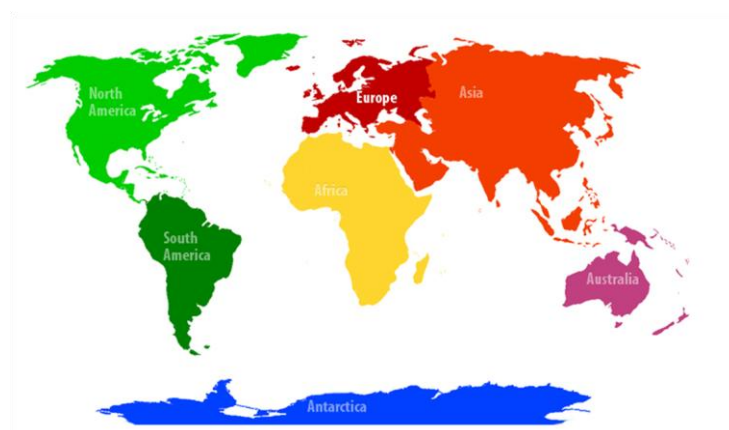
## WASH news

### WASH website

We are delighted to share with you the **new WASH website**: [www.worldactiononsalt.com](http://www.worldactiononsalt.com) Thank you to the Queen Mary web team who redesigned our website, improving the content, navigation and functionality.

If you have any updates that you would like to share on salt reduction in your country, I would be delighted to hear from you. Please [click here](#) to contact us.

### WASH member news



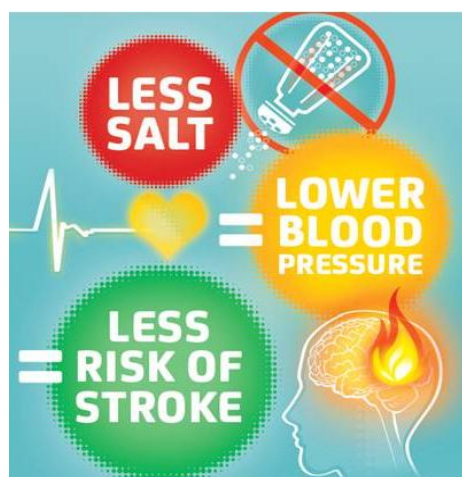
WASH membership has now grown to 455 individuals from 85 countries. Please click the map above to view a complete list of WASH members. WASH is pleased to announce the launch of salt reduction programmes which are now underway in South Africa, Brazil, Costa Rica and Chile. We are pleased to support all countries in their salt reduction initiatives.

We warmly welcome all new WASH members and encourage members to spread the invitation to their international colleagues. Please [click here](#) if you wish to become a WASH member.

## World Salt Awareness Week 2012

World Salt Awareness Week (WSAW) 2012 took place

**March 26<sup>th</sup> – April 1<sup>st</sup> 2012** and the theme was ***Reducing Salt; Preventing Stroke.***



Due to the help and support of WASH members, the poster was translated into 12 languages and continues to be available to download free from the WASH website. Please [click the image below](#) to view the translated posters.



***Salt and Stroke Prevention*** was selected as the topic for World Salt Awareness Week 2012 because salt is the major factor that raises blood pressure and high blood pressure is the single most important modifiable risk factor for stroke - responsible for approximately two thirds of strokes worldwide (62%). Evidence also suggests that a high salt intake has a direct, independent effect on stroke.

Reducing average salt intake by just 1g/day can prevent at least 2,600 deaths from stroke every year in the UK alone, plus the additional thousands of events that do not result in death. A 5g reduction in salt (from 10 to 5g) per day would reduce stroke by 23%, worldwide this would save 1.25 million lives each year.

Stroke is one of the leading causes of death worldwide with a greater disability impact than any other chronic disease in adults. Worldwide 15 million people suffer from stroke each year, of these 5.5 million die and another 5 million are left permanently disabled.

## Salt Awareness Week activities from around the world

This year we are delighted to announce that World Salt Awareness Week received more support than ever before with over 29 countries around the world participating. Below is a brief account of some of the activities that took place:

In **Australia** the ***Australian division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH)*** were once again very active: AWASH held a 'Reducing salt; preventing stroke' event at The George Institute in Sydney and at the National Stroke Foundation in Melbourne. The event in Sydney was opened

## World Action on Salt & Health

by The Hon. Kevin J Humphries, NSW Minister for Healthy Lifestyles, and chaired by Professor Bruce Neal from the George Institute for Global Health. This interactive event was used to discuss the challenges and opportunities for reducing salt in foods and brought together around 100 representatives from the food and catering industries with health professionals, food critics, academics and media personnel.

**AWASH** also launched the android version of their 'FoodSwitch' app during the week and released a new report on 'how to reduce salt intake by 5grams'. Please [click here](#) to view and download the app.

Please [click here](#) to watch Bruce Neal, from The George Institute for Global Health, Sydney talk about hidden salts in food and the risk of eating too much salt.

In **Barbados**, several articles were published in the 'Nation Newspaper', 'Barbados Advocate' and the online newspaper 'Barbados Today' about Salt Awareness Week and salt consumption.

**Jamaica** organised a 'flash mob' to raise awareness about the risks of a high salt diet.

The **Hypertension Committee of the National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh** observed World Salt Awareness Week by drawing attention to the excessive amounts of salt hidden in food eaten out of the home in restaurants, takeaways, fast foods, street food, and canteen food. The committee held discussions at the National Heart Foundation Hospital and Research Institute. A poster and a brochure on health effects of

high consumption of salt on health and advices on how to take less salt were developed and distributed all over the country.

In the **Netherlands**, the **Netherlands Heart Foundation** supported World Salt Awareness week by raising awareness, through their website, amongst consumers about the dangers of eating too much salt. **The Nutrition Centre** developed a booklet on 'how to eat less salt'.

Please [click here](#) to visit the Heart Foundation website.

Please [click here](#) to visit the Nutrition Centre website (in Dutch)

The **Pan American Health Organisation** (PAHO) hosted a webinar on 'Less salt; less risk of stroke' in both English and Spanish. **WASH** was invited to open and close the webinar.

In **Sweden** the **Swedish WASH society**, who have attracted close to 60 members from the medical profession, dieticians, pharmaceutical industry and food industry held a meeting with the Ministry of Rural Affaires, Animal and Food Division: 'Over salted food – a threat to public health' during the Week. The meeting, attended by high level officials, was held to draw attention to the severity of the issue relating to salt and health outcomes, with a focus on how to reduce the amount of salt in processed food. WASH Sweden urged the Ministers to take urgent action, as Sweden is trailing behind in this area.

WASH Sweden also published a critical commentary of the recent paper by Graudal et al. in the Swedish journal Vascular Medicine.



In the UK, CASH received news coverage in more than 270 print and broadcast features, achieving an estimated 35million opportunities to see our message.

CASH held a Parliamentary Reception at the House of Commons, supported by David Amess MP. The event was well attended with over 100 attendees including MPs, Peers, Department of Health, food industry and health groups



Speakers: David Amess MP Joe Korner Prof MacGregor Dr Hilary Jones

CASH also provided thousands of free leaflets, factsheets and shopping guides to enable Salt Awareness events all over the country. Over 600 events took place in hospitals, GPs, schools, pharmacies, libraries, gyms and universities.

CASH teamed up with The Association of London Environmental Health Managers (ALEHM) to conduct a survey comparing the salt content of takeaway and supermarket pizzas. CASH found that takeaway pizzas are higher in salt than supermarket pizzas, with one takeaway pepperoni pizza containing two and a half times more salt than an average supermarket pizza.

[A full summary and evaluation of Salt Awareness Week can be found here.](#)

**Pizza saltier than Atlantic sea water**

**Adam & Eve pizza 'as salty as 20 packets of crisps'**

A restaurant in north London has that has more than two teaspoons shown.

A pepperoni pizza from the Adam & Eve contained 10.57g (0.37oz) of salt.

**HOW IT'S HEALTHIER TO EAT AT HOME**

The five saltiest takeaway pizzas ...

	Weight	Salt per pizza	Salt per 100g
1 The Adam & Eve Pepperoni	380g	10.57g	2.77g
2 Viva Italia Pepperoni	439.6g	10.68g	2.43g
3 Ciao Bella Pepperoni	417.4g	9.22g	2.21g
4 Ciao Bella Margherita	361.8g	7.69g	2.13g
5 Il Mascolano Pepperoni and supermarket pizzas*	443g	9.21g	2.08g

The five healthiest pizzas ...

	Weight	Salt per pizza	Salt per 100g
1 Tesco Full-on flavour Simply Pepperoni thin stone-baked	265g	4.77g	1.8g
2 Iceland Stone-baked Sincere Double Pepperoni	370g	6.29g	1.7g
3 342g	5.81g	1.7g	
4 320g	5.36g	1.66g	
5 395g	6.32g	1.6g	

**Takeaway pizzas 'twice as salty' as supermarket ones**

By Sean Poulter  
Consumer Affairs Editor

WASH used twitter to engage with world groups interested in the week by hosting 'join the conversation' twitter chats throughout the week including topics such as: Food labelling, what can consumers do, who should be responsible for salt reduction and results from the Pizza survey conducted by CASH.

WASH was also invited to write a blog entry for Consumers International about the importance of clear food labelling at a global level, not just in the UK.

Wednesday, 28 March 2012

## Less salt, more consumer information please!

Focus on... Food, NCDs



As part of her work for **World Salt Awareness Week**, Public Health Nutritionist Clare Farrand explains the need for clear food labelling on a global scale.

We are all eating too much salt, and it's damaging our health. Salt puts up our blood pressure, which leads to strokes and heart attacks, and is also linked to kidney disease, stomach cancer and osteoporosis. I can't remember the last time I picked up a salt shaker, or caught a glimpse of the white stuff (people tend to hide it when I visit), but just because I don't use it doesn't mean I don't have to worry about my salt intake. That's because most of the salt that we eat (75%) is hidden in the foods that we buy.

## Consumers International Blog

All the essential action, events and ideas from the global consumer movement.



For more information on 'Reducing salt; preventing stroke' please [click here](#) to read the Salt Awareness Week editorial published in the Nutrition Bulletin.

## Spotlight around the world

The **Australian** Division of WASH (AWASH) continues to be very active in its national salt reduction strategy; the Australian Government's Food and Health Dialogue has recently launched a new website, please [click here](#).

The Dialogue is a joint government-industry-public health initiative aimed at addressing poor dietary habits and making healthier food choices easier and more accessible for all Australians. The website explains how the Food Category Action Plans are developed. To date, Category Action Plans have been endorsed for the bread, ready-to-eat breakfast cereal, simmer sauce and processed meat categories. The next categories will include soups, processed poultry, cheese and pies.

AWASH is continuing to coordinate an international collaborative effort to collect information on the composition of processed foods in different countries. The aim is to compare the nutrient content of major processed food categories against benchmarks, between countries and companies, and over time. 22 countries are currently involved, and the global branded food database protocol will soon be published in the European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation. Data collection is underway in India, China, Fiji, New Zealand and the UK. WASH is pleased to be working in collaboration with the Medical Research Council to collect the first round of nutritional information in the UK.

Please [click here](#) to view the latest AWASH campaign news bulletin

The **Pan American Health Organisation** (PAHO) also continues to be very active; many countries in the Pan American region have now reported active national strategies:

In **Argentina**, the **Health Department** reached an agreement with the hotel and restaurant federation to remove salt shakers from the tables at their eateries in order to help combat the prevalence of high blood pressure, which affects nearly a quarter of the population. The average Argentinean consumes 13g salt daily – almost 3 times more than the WHO recommended maximum intake of 5g/day. The Government has also signed an agreement with the local bread maker's federation to reduce the amount of salt in baked bread by 40%.

In **Barbados** the Minister of Health called for control in salt consumption at 'Agrofest', a large Agricultural fair held in Barbados, and attended by almost half of the population. It served to highlight the need to reduce salt intake in the Caribbean. Bread, fish, rice, poultry, and sweets have been identified contributing to approximately 50% of total sodium intake.

The Ministry of Health in **Brazil** have signed two new salt commitments terms including targets and timelines for salt reduction in new food categories and a framework for monitoring the sodium reduction plan. French bread has been identified as one of the highest contributors of salt in the Brazilian diet. It has been agreed that the sodium content of French bread will be reduced by 2.5% a year until 2014. Sodium targets have also been set for biscuits, cakes and snacks.

In **Chile**, The Ministry of Health's National Nutrition Strategy is shifting from obesity prevention to promotion of a healthy diet – which includes salt reduction. The National program 'Elige Vivir Sano' (choose living healthy) identified overconsumption of salt as one of the primary health concerns of Chileans.

Chile has also performed the first assessment of the voluntary salt reduction agreements with bread producers: The average salt content dropped from >800 mg/100 gr to 480 mg/100 gr of dry bread (marraquetas - the most commonly used bread in Chile). The Chilean WASH group ALASS continues to progress in this area.

In **Canada**, despite the Federal Government's recent rejection of proposals by provincial and territorial health Ministers to reduce the amount of sodium in the Canadian diet, implementation of some of the proposals has been initiated – at least in Ontario.

The Ontario Medical Association, Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Ottawa Heart Institute convened a two-day summit in Toronto to discuss the recommendations of the Sodium Working Group's *Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada*. The meeting brought together some 60 experts, including several members of the now disbanded Sodium Working Group. *"Lots can be accomplished at the provincial level"* said CSN's Kevin Willis. *"Food procurement policy for schools and other provincially funded institutions, public education, and information on the sodium content of restaurant foods are examples of actions that can be taken at a provincial level."*

The organizers of the Summit and participants committed to build and sustain action on sodium in Ontario and an Ontario Sodium Working Group has been formed. The Ontario Medical Association (OMA) is helping to lead the charge. See "Salt" on the OMA website [www.oma.org](http://www.oma.org)

The **Healthy Caribbean Coalition** also gave support for Agrofest 2011, and organised a number of important activities to raise awareness about eating too much salt.

These activities included:

- Workshop for Agrofest food vendors
- Discussion with bakery and food producer around product reformulation
- "Salt seminar" for food and drink producers and manufacturers

Healthy Caribbean coalition has also prepared a 'culturally specific' salt jingle very for use on radio and at public events.

Please [click here](#) to view more information

In **Korea**, a nationwide campaign to reduce salt intake has been launched. 200 representatives of consumer groups, food makers and medics, media personnel and academics gathered together to establish the 'headquarters' for a movement to reduce salt intake in the population.

According to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, a Korean consumes 4,878 milligrams of sodium a day on average, about 2.4 times the World Health Organizations guideline.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology plans to hold educational sessions for students and their parents. Large retailers will be advised to install low-sodium parlours where food with less salt will be specially displayed. Many Korean companies are already starting to make reductions, including the noodle and packaged soup categories, reducing salt gradually by 15%, as well as in the snack and processed food categories having committed to reduce salt by 8% by 2014.

Please [click here](#) to read the full news story

In the **Netherlands** the Dutch Minister of Health recently called to legislate the amount of salt added to food by the food industry. This announcement follows the recent report released by the National Institute of Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) showing that salt intake is high; with men consuming on average between 9.9g salt/day and women consuming approximately 7.5g/day; far in excess of the 5g maximum intake.

In the **US**, **The American Heart Association** is taking an aggressive stance on salt reduction. For the past year, the association has been engaging public health organizations, including the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, as well as other key members of the scientific community to support implementation of the Institute of Medicine's sodium reduction recommendations made in the report, *Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States*. A focus has been placed on the primary recommendation of the Food and Drug Administration setting mandatory national standards for the sodium content of foods.

## World Health Assembly

*'The best days for public health are ahead of us'*  
Margaret Chan, World Health Assembly opening address 21<sup>st</sup> May 2012.

The Sixty-fifth session of the World Health Assembly took place in Geneva from 21–26 May 2012. At this session, the Health Assembly discussed a number of public health issues. Governments agreed to a historic target to reduce premature deaths from non-communicable diseases (NCDs - including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases) by 25% by 2025. The target was endorsed by all 194 of the World Health Organization's Member States on Saturday, 26 May.

The [resolution](#) passed at January's WHO Executive Board urges Member States to complete work on the global monitoring framework by the end of 2012. The WHA is therefore the only opportunity for Member States to endorse any targets before the deadline outlined at the Executive Board.

WASH, through its members has been working to ensure that the 5g salt target remains in the Global Monitoring Framework. Specific targets are to be decided in October, so WASH will continue to need your support the coming months.

A joint statement on the Control and Prevention of NCDs was delivered by Modi Mwatsama, National Heart Forum. The statement was warmly welcomed and accepted by the WHO. Please [click here](#) to read.



## New Resources

In support of the World Health Assembly, WASH developed a new salt factsheet, explaining the benefits of salt reduction. Please contact us if you would like a copy of this factsheet to print for free.

## Reducing salt; saving lives



### Salt damages your health

Raised blood pressure is the biggest cause of death in the world (7million deaths a year) and is responsible for two thirds of strokes and half of all heart disease.

**Salt is the major factor that puts up our blood pressure.**

### We are all eating too much salt

Small amounts of salt (sodium and chloride) are essential for our wellbeing. Adults need less than 1 gram of salt per day. However we all eat much more than is required: salt intakes range from 8 to 18 grams a day around the world, hence we have a global epidemic of blood pressure-related disease.



### Why 5g?

Adults should consume less than 5g per day, about a level teaspoon. This target was designed to have the maximum effect on blood pressure, but also as a practical target for the food industry and consumers to achieve.

**The WHO set this worldwide target of 5g in 1983, which was further endorsed in 2003, 2006 and 2012.**

Worldwide, it is estimated that a reduction of 6g/day in salt intake would prevent approximately 2.5 million stroke and coronary heart disease deaths a year<sup>1</sup>. A 15% reduction in low and middle income countries over 10 years would save more than 8.5 million deaths<sup>2</sup>. Over a longer period of time, there would be an even greater effect as it prevents the rise in blood pressure that occurs with age. It is particularly important that children do not eat too much salt, as blood pressure first starts to rise in childhood.

### Salt reduction is easy and cheap

Salt reduction is the simplest, most cost effective measure for reducing cardiovascular disease because of its high impact on health, high feasibility and low cost of implementation. Salt reduction has been identified as a priority intervention and listed as a 'best buy' in non communicable disease prevention.

In some countries most of the salt comes from salt added during cooking, at the table and in sauces, in which case simple, but effective, public health campaigns will encourage consumers to eat less salt.

In most countries, 80% of the salt that we eat comes from the foods that we buy, so the consumer has very little choice in how much salt they eat.

The food industry therefore needs to slowly reduce the amount of salt they use. A successful policy has already been pioneered in the UK – most products over the last five years have had salt reduced by 20-30%, saving over 6000 lives per year and resulting in healthcare savings of £1.5billion per year (NICE).



**Salt reduction strategies are directed towards the entire population and benefit everyone regardless of age, economic status or ethnicity.**

Many countries are now following the UK's lead – and it is vital that a worldwide target is set of 5g a day to save the maximum number of lives.

**Our goal in line with the WHO recommended target, is to reduce worldwide salt intake to less than 5g per day for all adults by 2025. Reducing salt intake will save lives at very little cost.**