



PRESS RELEASE

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Tax on salt and voluntary industry reductions in salt content could reduce deaths from cardiovascular disease by 3 percent in developing countries

Preliminary data from new Harvard report presented at the World Congress of Cardiology organized by the World Heart Federation

Dubai (date to be inserted) Voluntary industry reductions in salt content and taxation on products containing salt in 19 developing countries could reduce the number of deaths each year from cardiovascular disease (CVD) by 2-3 percent in these countries. The preliminary data presented today at the World Congress of Cardiology are the first findings from a new report from Harvard that will be published later this year.

The study set out to assess the cost-effectiveness of two interventions - voluntary salt reduction by industry, and taxation on salt - in 19 developing countries, that represent more than half of the world's population. The required salt reduction levels were modeled on the UK Food Standards Agency experience which set a series of targets for individual food products that have led to a net intake reduction, so far, of 9.5 per cent overall in the country. While a taxation increase of 40 per cent on industry prices (similar to tobacco), determined by previous work to lead to a 6 per cent reduction in consumption, was also evaluated.

The analysis found that both strategies would be save money by reducing the number of people needing treatment for hypertension and CVD events such as myocardial infarction (heart attacks) and stroke. Moreover, the study found that these two strategies could reduce the incidence of myocardial infarctions (heart attacks) by up to about 1.7 per cent and 1.47 per cent in China and India respectively. Reductions would also be seen in the incidence of stroke of 4.7 per cent in China and 4 per cent in India.

“These results show that strategies to reduce sodium consumption, even by modest amounts, could lead to significant reductions in CVD mortality in developing countries and potentially save overall healthcare costs associated with these diseases,” said Dr. Thomas Gaziano, assistant professor, Harvard School of Medicine. “In developing countries, where the burden of CVD is highest, these simple steps could deliver a significant long-term impact and must be something that governments trying to manage rising healthcare costs should consider.”

CVD is the world's biggest killer, claiming 17.3 million lives each year.¹ More than 80 per cent of CVD deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Projections suggest that CVD will remain the single leading cause of death, and by 2030 will be responsible for 23.6 million deaths each year.

Salt intake and cardiovascular disease

Elevated sodium intake has significant implications for cardiovascular health. A positive relationship between salt intake and high blood pressure has been established, while salt reduction trials have revealed that a decrease in salt intake is directly related to a decrease in blood pressure.



Hypertension (high blood pressure) is one of the major preventable risk factors for premature death from CVD worldwide. High blood pressure contributes to around half of all CVD and the risk of developing CVD doubles for every 10-point increase in diastolic blood pressure.

High blood pressure that is left untreated can greatly increase a person's risk of developing CVD. Treating raised blood pressure has been associated with a 35–40 per cent reduction in the risk of stroke and at least a 16 per cent reduction in the risk of myocardial infarction.

About the World Congress of Cardiology

The World Congress of Cardiology Scientific Sessions (WCC) is the official congress of the World Heart Federation and is held every two years. Through the Congress the World Heart Federation offers an international stage for the latest developments in science and public outreach in the field of cardiovascular health. The WCC places emphasis on the complementary nature of science and public outreach and strives to spread the message that through individual, community and patient-care interventions, the growing epidemic of cardiovascular diseases can be prevented. For more information, please visit www.worldcardiocongress.org; keep up with the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag [#WCC2012Dubai](https://twitter.com/WCC2012Dubai).

About the World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation is dedicated to leading the global fight against heart disease and stroke with a focus on low- and middle-income countries via a united community of more than 200 member organizations. With its members, the World Heart Federation works to build global commitment to addressing cardiovascular health at the policy level, generates and exchanges ideas, shares best practice, advances scientific knowledge and promotes knowledge transfer to tackle cardiovascular disease – the world's number one killer. It is a growing membership organization that brings together the strength of medical societies and heart foundations from more than 100 countries. Through our collective efforts we can help people all over the world to lead longer and better heart-healthy lives. For more information, please visit www.worldheart.org; twitter.com/worldheartfed; facebook.com/worldheartfederation.

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¹ Global Atlas on Cardiovascular Disease Prevention and Control. Mendis S, Puska P, Norrving B editors. World Health Organization, Geneva 2011.