

## SALT-RELATED HEALTH PROBLEMS

Salt matters for several reasons. Over half of Australia's 13 million registered voters at the last federal election had one of the two commonest health problems that are caused or aggravated by salt:

- 3.0 million had prehypertension (BP 120/80 or higher) [1];
- 3.7 million had hypertension [2];
- 6.7 million therefore had at least one salt-related health problem—which is over half of the 13 million adult population of Australia.

Moreover the data for the 3.0 million with prehypertension are based on a Heart Foundation survey limited to adults aged 18 to 69 [1]. Blood pressure rises more steeply from age 70, so the prevalence of 3.0 million for prehypertension is a significant underestimate.

When a blood pressure of 120/80 or more was called *high normal blood pressure* it was very seldom treated, but doctors should now diagnose *prehypertension* and prescribe better food [3]. Food complying with an Australian dietary guideline (choose foods low in salt) is by definition better food, especially if it follows the other dietary guidelines, especially the guidelines for less fat and more fruit and vegetables [4].

The prevalence of the 23 other salt-related health problems in the table is not accurately known. The estimate of 0.25 million for severe premenstrual syndrome is roughly 5% of the female population aged 15–45, and 0.04 million (40 000) is an informal estimate of the prevalence of Meniere's disorder.

	<i>Condition</i>	<i>Quality of the evidence</i>	<i>millions</i>
1.	prehypertension [3, 5]	Controlled trials	3.0
2.	hypertension [2, 5]	Controlled trials	3.7
3.	severe premenstrual syndrome [6]	Clinical/epidemiological	0.25
4.	vertigo of Meniere's disorder [6]	“	0.04
5.	acute salt poisoning [6]	“	
6.	Chinese restaurant syndrome [6]	“	
7.	idiopathic oedema [6]	“	
8.	congestive heart failure [6]	“	
9.	carpal tunnel syndrome [6]	“	
10.	glaucoma [6]	“	
11.	diabetic retinitis [7]	“	
12.	macular degeneration (wet type) [7]	“	
13.	cataract [8]	“	
14.	asthma [9]	“	
15.	osteoporosis [10]	“	
16.	calcium urinary stones [11]	Controlled trial	
17.	Stomach cancer [12]	Clinical/epidemiological	
18.	left ventricular hypertrophy* [13]	“	
19.	pulse wave velocity [14]	“	
20.	aggregation of erythrocytes [7]	“	
21.	Helicobacter pylori infection [15]	lab work on gene transcription	
22.	Crohn's disease [7]	Clinical/epidemiological	
23.	microalbuminuria [16]	“	
24.	diabetic nephropathy [16, 17]	“	
25.	impaired endothelial function [18]	“	

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