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Use the **editorial address** when writing about the newsletter—see the panel on page 4.

Did You Know March 4 – 10th Was World Salt Awareness Week?

Key Points:

- ✚ Annually, the World Health Organisation holds World Salt Awareness Week to raise awareness of the hidden dangers of consuming salt and to help governments and individuals, world-wide, reduce sodium consumption.
- ✚ Australia needs to do more about dietary salt and to participate in Salt Awareness Week in 2020.

What's the most common seasoning Aussies add to their food? Salt! Our bodies require a certain amount of salt (sodium). But in Australia and around the world, average diners consume much more salt than they should.

Here are some questions to ask to help you become a “salt-savvy” consumer:

Question #1: Our bodies need sodium—so do we or don't we need to salt our food?

Answer: For most of us, the salt that naturally occurs in food is all we need. Unless we are exercising heavily in a warm climate, chances are good that we don't need to add extra. For our ancient ancestors, salt was often in short supply, so our species developed a craving for it. However, for modern humans, finding salt is no longer the problem! The National Health and Medical Research Council have set an 'Adequate Intake' of 20–40 mmol (460–920 mg) of sodium per day. This corresponds to 1.15–2.3 grams of salt.

Most Australian adults have a daily salt intake of about 10 grams, i.e. many times the maximum value of the Adequate Intake range. Nutrition Australia's 'Suggested Dietary Target' of 1600 mg of sodium (equivalent to about 4 grams of salt), for Australian adults, equates to about half the average Australian adult's current salt intake.

Question #2: My doctor says to cut down on salt to prevent high blood pressure. Is that the only danger?

Answer: High blood pressure (hypertension) is the condition we hear most about when it comes to controlling our salt intake, but it is important to see the bigger picture. High blood pressure in turn can contribute to heart and kidney disease, putting us at a greater risk for stroke, vision loss, cancers and other serious health issues.

Question #3: I cook without salt and keep the salt shaker off the table—does that ensure that I'm not consuming too much?

Answer: The salt shaker is just the beginning of the story when it comes to excess sodium. Salt is an inexpensive seasoning and preservative, used extensively by food manufacturers and restaurants. You might think of salted nuts or potato chips as being the main culprits, but foods need not taste salty to hide an unhealthy amount of sodium.

Sources: www.nutritianaustralia.org
www.thealdennetwork.com/march-4-10-2019-is-world-salt-awareness-

Did You Know March 4 – 10th Was World Salt Awareness Week?

~ Continued:

Almost all packaged meals, frozen dinners, canned soups and sauces, and even some breakfast cereals and breads contain a generous amount. Deli meats and even fresh chicken can have added salt. So it's important to read food labels. Food manufacturers also need to take a lead role in offering reduced-sodium alternatives.



Question #4: Won't my food taste bland without salt?

Answer: People who routinely salt their food often believe food must be salted to be flavourful. However, many other seasonings also enhance flavour. Substitute spices and fresh herbs for the salt in recipes. Try lemon juice on fish and vegetables. Shake on a salt-free seasoning combination. At first, you may miss the taste of salt. Gradually, however, you will start to taste more of the natural flavours of foods. Once your taste buds adapt, you may find that the processed foods you once liked now taste unpleasantly salty.



Question #5: Is it true that gourmet salts are less harmful and might even be good for me?

Answer: As we push our shopping trolley through the seasonings aisle of the supermarket, we see more and more pretty (and pricey) bottles of "artisan or gourmet" type salt products. Black sea salt, Himalayan

pink salt, rock salt, chicken, celery and onion salt and even Hawaiian amongst the table salts. Some salt producers make health claims that simply aren't supported by any medical evidence. Salt is not good for you.

Skip the Salt

The information in this article is not intended to take the place of your healthcare provider's advice. Talk to your doctor about your sodium intake.

"Unacceptable" levels of salt in fast food meals aimed at children

Health experts have sounded a warning over salt levels in popular kids' food, with some fast food giants serving up single portions containing more than a day's recommended salt intake.



Key Points:

- ✚ A new report analyses salt levels in kids meals at McDonald's, KFC, Subway and Hungry Jacks
- ✚ Nuggets emerge as a key culprit in highly salted foods
- ✚ Health experts call for greater regulation of fast food in Australia

The fast food outlets were also found to use significantly more salt in some of their Australian meals than in the same food at their overseas stores, with experts saying a lack of regulation was to blame.

The new report by the George Institute for Global Health analysed the salt content in kid's meals at KFC, McDonald's, Hungry Jack's and Subway.

“Unacceptable” levels of salt in fast food meals aimed at children ~ Cont.

The report found a wide variation across the stores and among individual items, with nuggets and fries emerging as key culprits.

Top five highest salt levels in children's meals

Outlet	Meal	Portion size (g)	Total salt (g)
Hungry Jack's	6 nuggets kid's pack (including dipping sauce, small chips and water)	288	3.78
Hungry Jack's	3 nuggets kid's pack (including dipping sauce, small chips and water)	174	2.75
Hungry Jack's	Cheeseburger kid's pack (including small chips and water)	210	2.75
McDonald's	Happy Meal (cheeseburger, fries and water)	440	2.32
McDonald's	Happy Meal (wholemeal snack wrap crispy, fries and water)	433	1.94

Source: The George Institute published ABC, March 2019

The George Institute report makes a number of recommendations for both government and fast food outlets, including:

- Establishing salt targets for children's meals.
- Creating a regulatory monitoring scheme to assess industry compliance with established salt targets.
- Increasing consumer awareness campaigns to inform about the health benefits of reducing salt intake specifically for children.
- Fast food outlets gradually reformulate high salt products to lowest levels of salt possible.
- Making the healthier option the default option.

Become a Salt Skipper

Fast food outlets respond:

McDonald's, Subway and Hungry Jack's responded to the report, each stating they offered parents and kids a selection of foods, including low-salt options.

"Subway will continue to provide guests with a range of menu choices and the option to have subs, salads and wraps prepared without additional salt or higher-salt ingredients such as sauce, pickles or olives," a spokesperson said.

"[Parents] can absolutely choose a Happy Meal with a cheeseburger and fries, or we have a wide range of other options, such as apple slices, grilled chicken, cherry tomatoes, water, and wholemeal snack wraps," a McDonald's spokesperson said.

And a spokesperson for Hungry Jack's said parents could request no added salt when ordering chips as part of its "have it your way" menu.

"Hungry Jack's has worked closely with suppliers of its fresh, quality ingredients to achieve reductions in saturated fats, sodium and sugar across its menu," the spokesperson said.

KFC did not respond to a request for comment before the ABC's publication.

Commentary: The above fast food outlet responses are indicative of the high level of awareness that is required to educate food outlets, consumers and producers on what constitutes low sodium options for Australian children and adults.

The upper levels of daily intake for sodium for **children** depend on age (and are currently under review). When translated to salt intake, these are:

- 1 to 3 years: 0.5 - 1g
- 4 to 8 years: 0.75 -1.5g
- 9 to 13 years: 1 -2g
- 14 years and over: 1.15 -2.3g

The 'Suggested Dietary Target' of 1600 mg of sodium (equivalent to about 4 grams of salt) is set for **adults** - Ed.



HAPPY
Easter

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Chocolate Sauce



Especially for Easter, here's a low sodium recipe for chocolate sauce that can be used to decorate and drizzle over your favourite desserts, used as a dipping or fondue sauce for slices of fruit – strawberries, blueberries, apple pears and even orange segments.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups of brown sugar
 - ¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 - 1 tbsps. cornstarch or arrowroot
 - 1 cup light low sodium coconut milk, canned
- (Add a dash finely grated or ground chili or ginger if you are adventurous)
- Trickle of olive oil, if needed, to mix to a good consistency

Method:

1. In a medium saucepan, combine coconut sugar, cocoa powder and cornstarch or arrowroot. Place over medium heat and gradually stir in coconut milk. If you are adding chili or ginger, now is the time to add. Cook, whisking frequently, until it's smooth and thick – about 10 minutes of whisking.
2. Remove from the heat and cool at room temperature.
3. Store in a sterilised jar in the fridge. Not sure how long it will keep for without adding salt as a preservative – so best enjoy it soonest!



Happy Easter to all SSN readers!

At Salt Skip News, we are always interested to hear from readers. Please send us your Salt Skip news, tips and salt-free or low sodium recipes... please email to Malcolm.Riley@csiro.au

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