

## THE "HALT THE SALT" DIET KIT

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A major Australian dietary survey indicated that daily sodium intake ranges from 130 to over 200 mmol/day (National Health and Medical Research Council 1984). The current recommended daily intake is 40-100 mmol/day. Epidemiological studies between populations have shown a relationship between high sodium intakes and the prevalence of hypertension. A sodium intake of < 70 mmol/day is recommended to reduce blood pressure in hypertensive subjects (Law et al. 1991). Sodium restriction is part of the management and treatment of certain other diseases such as renal failure. Studies also have shown that calciuria increases with urinary sodium excretion and so high salt intakes may be a factor in the development of osteoporosis. The major sources of sodium in the Australian diet are staple processed foods such as bread, cereals and spreads. Many health professionals consider that problems related to consumer preferences and knowledge of food sources and product availability and product labelling make it difficult to achieve compliance to a low sodium diet.

The "Halt The Salt" kit was designed to educate people in the sources of sodium in the diet and in the salt reduced alternatives available. This kit is being used in a large prospective study of sodium restriction and bone mass in twins aged 45-55 years. The kit includes a basic low salt diet booklet, exchange lists, a book of food photographs with an accompanying counselling protocol and a food record book. It has a colour-coded traffic light theme of "stop", "caution" and "go". Compliance is measured using food records, 24 hour urine collections and a checklist of foods contributing sodium to the diet. A six week pilot study was conducted using the kit for a group of 27 women aged  $49 \pm 3.6$  years (mean  $\pm$  1 SD). The study consisted of a two week baseline phase and four week low sodium diet phase. Urinary sodium excretion, an index of sodium intake, was  $94 \pm 8$  mmol/day at baseline (data from two 24 h urine collections); after education urinary sodium fell to  $54 \pm 5$  mmol/day (data from four collections). Eighty-one % of subjects achieved an intake of <70 mmol/day.

A sodium intake of 50-70 mmol/day or less can be achieved in women aged 45 to 55 years using the "Halt The Salt" diet kit. Further testing in males and other age groups is in progress.

LAW, M.R., FROST, C.D. and WALD, N.J. (1991). *Br. Med. J.* 302: 819.

NATIONAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (1984). In 'Report of the Working Party on Sodium in the Australian Diet', p. 31. (Australian Government Publishing Service: Canberra).

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