Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada
Recommendations of the Sodium Working Group
and Progress in the Health Portfolio

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Championing Public Health Nutrition
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Outline

- Sodium and Canadians’ Health
- The Sodium Working Group’s recommendations
- Progress on the recommended actions
- Next Steps
Cardiovascular diseases are the number one cause of death and disability for Canadians.

A high intake of sodium is associated with HBP and is also likely to predispose children to develop hypertension later in life.

Sodium reduction interventions are among the most cost-effective ways of reducing the burden of cardiovascular diseases.

Estimated that a reduction of 1800 mg in average sodium intake of Canadians would result in direct healthcare savings of $1.38 billion per year; including indirect costs, savings would be $2.99 billion per year.
Sodium Intake in Canada*

- Canadians, aged 1+, consume on average about 3400 mg/day of sodium
  - More than double the Adequate Intake (AI = 1500mg)
  - 50% more than the Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL = 2300mg)
- The majority consume more than the UL
  - over 90% of men and 66% of women, aged 19+
  - 76% of children aged 1 to 3
  - more than 90% of children aged 4 to 8
  - more than 80% of adolescent girls
  - 97% of adolescent boys

*Canadian Community Health Survey-Cycle 2.2 on Nutrition, Statistics Canada
Sources of sodium found in the typical North American diet (Mattes and Donnelly, 1991):

- **77%** is derived from sodium in processed food products
- 12% occurs naturally in food
- 6% is added at the table
- 5% is added during cooking
Data are based on the Canadian Community Health Survey - Cycle 2.2 on Nutrition, Statistics Canada, 2004.

Percentage of total sodium consumed from major grouped-food sources by all respondents (with sandwiches split into components)
Functions of sodium

- Flavour and texture
- Microbial food safety, preservation and shelf life
- Processing:
  - Protein binding, tenderness and “mouth feel”
  - Control of fermentation in bread, cheese, some types of meat, pickles, etc.
  - Maintenance of colour in meats
- Food additives – sodium phosphates in moisture enhanced meats, sodium nitrites in cured meats, etc…
In October 2007, the Minister of Health announced the establishment of a multi-stakeholder Working Group to develop a strategy to reduce the sodium intake of Canadians (first meeting February 2008)

Sodium Working group (SWG) includes 25 representatives from:
- Scientific and Health-professional Community (6)
- Health-focused & Consumer NGO (5)
- Food Manufacturing & Food service Industry (7)
- Government (7)
5 Sets of Recommendations

- Six *overarching* recommendations, including the interim intake goal of 2,300 mg of sodium/day by 2016—with a longer-term goal of 95% of population with a daily intake below the UL;
- Ten recommendations for reducing sodium in the *food supply*;
- Seven recommendations for *awareness and education*;
- Five recommendations for *research*;
- Five recommendations for *monitoring and evaluation*. 
The structured voluntary approach to reducing sodium in the food supply envisaged by the SWG involves:

- published sodium reduction targets for foods
- defined timelines
- a mechanism for public commitment by industry to the targets
- a plan for monitoring progress by a body other than the food industry
- a plan for independent evaluation of the success of the program with the option of taking stronger measures as necessary depending on progress.
Reducing sodium in prepackaged foods:

- In the fall of 2009, Health Canada initiated the process of developing targets for various food categories.

Progress to date:

- A first set of draft targets was published in February 2010.
- Health Canada is currently collecting data for a second set of foods.
- The complete set of finalized food targets are expected to be published in early 2011.
Reducing sodium in restaurant foods:

- In June 2010, Health Canada initiated discussions with the restaurant and foodservice industries on setting targets for foods sold in those establishments as well as approaches to reduce sodium for foods prepared on site.
  - Complete targets for restaurant foods by mid 2011 (Group III foods).
  - Health Canada is undertaking steps to modernize the food additive regulatory structure.
Supporting elements for reducing sodium:

- Health Canada is reviewing the nutrition labelling regulations and practices to enable consumers to make better informed decisions about foods.
  - Developing guidelines to improve consistency of serving sizes
  - Considering changes to NFT including DV for sodium
  - Improving provision of nutrition information in restaurants and foodservices
  - Assessing overall performance of nutrition labelling regulations.
Education and Awareness activities:

- Health Canada is developing common messaging regarding sodium reduction.

- Engaged in increasing awareness and educating Canadians on nutrition labelling.
  - New education campaign to increase consumers’ use and understanding of the Nutrition Facts table and to help them make better informed decisions.

- PHAC commissioned and published public opinion research (POR) report entitled “Canadians’ and Health Care Professionals’ Views on Sodium”.
Last January CIHR hosted a research workshop: "Developing a Research Agenda to Support Sodium Reduction in Canada".

- CIHR launched a competition to fund applications relevant to the broad area of sodium and health.
- A total of $900,000 over three years has been earmarked to date for this competition.
- A second call for proposals has been launched on Food and Health, including sodium reduction at the population level.

NSERC is discussing targeted call for proposals through their Collaborative R&D Grants (CRD) program.
Evaluation and Monitoring Prong - Progress

- Developing a plan to monitor progress towards sodium reductions on an annual basis.

- Government of Canada and WHO organised a technical meeting on “Strategies to Monitor and Evaluate Population Sodium Consumption and Sources of Sodium in the Diet”.
  - Experts and policy makers from the six WHO regions, including Canada and the PAHO.
  - Developing a global framework to monitor and evaluate:
    - population sodium consumption,
    - sources of sodium in the diet,
    - sodium knowledge and behaviour.
Report was released and submitted to the Minister of Health on July 29, 2010.

Health Portfolio are working with FPT partners to assess the recommendations and determine how they can best be addressed to reach the intake goals.

Recommendations were discussed at the FPT Ministers meeting on September 13-14, 2010 and Ministers endorsed the overall sodium reduction goal.
Thank you

Website links

Health Canada’s Sodium Page
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/sodium

Sodium Working Group Page
www.healthcanada.gc.ca/swg
Annex 1

Progress on Setting Targets
For Food Categories
Developing targets

- Using CCHS 2.2 data to determine Canadian consumption patterns
- Modelling of dietary intakes using various scenarios starting with targets set in the United Kingdom by the UK FSA
- Analysis of Canadian food label data to determine the range of sodium in foods and weighted averages using AC Nielsen sales volume data
- Determination of Canadian targets based on a set of criteria – generally set at or near the Canadian weighted average or using targets set by the UK FSA.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Categories</th>
<th>N Obs</th>
<th>Avg Serving Size</th>
<th>Wtd Avg Sodium</th>
<th>Std Dev</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>1st Quart</th>
<th>Med</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Avg mg/100g</th>
<th>Max mg/100g</th>
<th>Criteria Used</th>
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<td>Dairy Products - Natural Cheese</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brie/Camembert</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>533</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>720</td>
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<td>Criterion #3</td>
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<td>Cheddar Light</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>720.8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>813</td>
<td>720</td>
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<td>1750</td>
<td>2500</td>
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<td>1740</td>
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<td>(Small sample size)</td>
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<td>720</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous Cheeses (swiss, gouda, blue, curds, brick)</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>520.8</td>
<td>132.1</td>
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<td>833</td>
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<td>Mixed Cheese Shredded</td>
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<td>967</td>
<td>720</td>
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<td>Mozzarella</td>
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<td>220</td>
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