

**EMBARGOED UNTIL 12:01AM WEDNESDAY 23 AUGUST**

## **NEW RESEARCH SHOWS FAMILY FAVOURITE COOKING SAUCES ARE PACKED WITH SALT**

Convenience cooking sauces may be quick and easy but come at a high cost to health, according to new research<sup>1</sup> released today by The George Institute for Global Health, VicHealth and the Heart Foundation.

Researchers analysed 2215 cooking sauce products sold in four major supermarkets (Coles, Woolworths, ALDI and IGA) from 2010-2017 and found they have one big problem in common - they're packed with salt, with some brands nearly 100 times worse than others.

The results were released in Victoria today to mark the launch of [Unpack the Salt](#) – a new consumer awareness campaign led by the Heart Foundation – urging Victorians to be aware of hidden salt in packaged foods.

The report found the pasta sauces, Indian and Asian-style pastes, refrigerated and powdered recipe-based sauces such as casserole and curry mixes that we throw into meals are pushing us over the maximum daily salt intake of five grams recommended by the World Health Organization.

According to VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter Victorians currently eat nearly double that amount each day, with 75 per cent of it coming from processed foods.

“Victorians are consuming an alarming amount of salt – more than 15,000 tonnes each year, which can lead to a lifetime of health issues,” Ms Rechter said.

### **Key findings:**

- There was a massive difference in the amount of salt between brands for tomato based pasta sauces, with some containing 90 times more salt than others<sup>2</sup>
- Barilla Olive pasta sauce stood out for its high salt content (1.88g salt/100g), 90 times saltier than Tenuta Fragassi Sugo Pronto Napoletana Neapolitan Style Pasta Sauce (0.02g salt/100g)
- Salt content was highest in powdered sauces that are used as a component of meals such as casseroles, curries and pasta bakes, where salt targets weren't imposed on food manufacturers. Some contained almost half a family's recommended daily salt intake in one serve alone<sup>3</sup>
- For powdered sauces, McCormick Garlic & Rosemary Lamb Shanks topped the list with 22.38 grams of salt per 100 grams compared with Maggi Tomato & Onion Sausages (1.79g salt/100g), which had the least amount of salt
- On average, salt content of ambient meal-based sauces (shelf-stable sauces found in the unrefrigerated supermarket aisles) increased by 29% from 2010-2017, with Asian/black bean sauces the highest (2.37g salt/100g)
- Curry pastes also contained high levels of salt, with some containing 20 times more salt than others<sup>4</sup>
- McCormicks powder-based sauces were found to have the highest salt content of all cooking sauces, and Tenuta Fragassi tomato-based cooking sauces the least.

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<sup>1</sup> "Changes in salt levels in cooking sauces, Australia (2010-2017) report" by The George Institute for Global Health and VicHealth

<sup>2</sup> Tomato based pasta sauces ranged in salt content from 0.02g to 1.88g salt per 100g (8-750mg sodium/100g)

<sup>3</sup> Keen's Mustard Honey Mustard Chicken contains 2.12g salt/serve. Recommended salt maximum intake is 5g/day

<sup>4</sup> Curry pastes ranged in salt content from 0.63g to 11.33g salt per 100g (251-4530mg sodium/100g)

The George Institute's Public Health Nutritionist Clare Farrand said the report showed excessive levels of salt in cooking sauces, and huge variation in salt levels from product to product, put consumers' health at risk.

"A fresh pasta sauce from the supermarket refrigerator contains almost a third of a daily salt intake in the sauce alone<sup>5</sup> - add cheese and you could be blowing the family's salt intake to well over the maximum daily limit," Ms Farrand said.

Ms Farrand added: "While powdered mixes are used to make up a meal, and are often shared between a family - many people don't realise just how salty they are. The best advice is to check the label and try and choose the lower salt option, or better still – make your own – with far less salt."

Heart Foundation Victoria CEO Kellie-Ann Jolly said the link between a high salt diet and high blood pressure is clear-cut, leading to an increased risk of heart disease.

"High blood pressure causes 32 per cent of cardiovascular disease in Australia – including heart attack and stroke, and currently there are close to six million adult Australians living with high blood pressure – that's over a third of our adult population," Ms Jolly said.

"When you cook with some of these packaged sauces, you're eating way more than the recommended amount of salt per serving. This is alarming given we need to be encouraging people to eat less salt, not more."

Ms Jolly added that in good news the research revealed some progress, with manufacturers reducing the amount of salt in pasta sauces by 27 per cent from 2010-2017, in line with salt targets.

"While we have seen salt levels drop in some sauces, the huge variation shows that manufacturers can produce lower salt products and reminds us that there is much more work to be done."

Ms Jerril Rechter said alarming levels of hidden salt in packaged foods led the Victorian Salt Reduction Partnership to launch [Unpack the Salt](#): "It's critical we raise awareness of the dangers of hidden salt in packaged foods to help consumers make the healthy choice for their families."

Ms Rechter encouraged people to use the resources at [Unpack the Salt](#) to make better decisions about their health.

#### **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

- Heart Foundation Victoria - Fleur Jacobs, 0423 827 697, [fleur.jacobs@heartfoundation.org.au](mailto:fleur.jacobs@heartfoundation.org.au)
- The George Institute for Global Health – Julia Timms, 0410 411 983, [jtimms@georgeinstitute.org.au](mailto:jtimms@georgeinstitute.org.au)
- VicHealth - Rachel Murphy, 0435 761 732, [rmurphy@vichealth.vic.gov.au](mailto:rmurphy@vichealth.vic.gov.au)

#### **Attachments**

1. Top ten highest and lowest salt product tables
2. "Changes in salt levels in cooking sauces, Australia (2010-2017) report" by The George Institute for Global Health and VicHealth (available on request)
3. Consumer tips (see below)
4. Video - Sian Armstrong, Heart Foundation dietitian

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<sup>5</sup> Latina Fresh Creamy Bacon & Mushroom had 1.45g of salt per 100g (547mg/100g). Serving size = 106g

### Tips for consumers

- Visit [www.unpackthesalt.com.au](http://www.unpackthesalt.com.au) for more information about the campaign and for tips and resources on how to identify salt in packaged foods and reduce your salt intake
- Sodium is one component of salt - it is the sodium that is labelled on nutrition information panels on packaged foods
- To reduce salt in your diet and for your family, it's important to know how to check the amount of sodium listed on packaged foods. Use the 'per 100g' column to compare the sodium content of different brands
- For cooking sauces, aim for less than 400mg sodium per 100g
- When using packaged sauces from the supermarket, try using less – for example, use only half of the packet or jar to reduce the amount of salt you will eat. You can always top up with extra herbs, and vegetables
- The best way to reduce salt is to eat more fresh foods and reduce your reliance on processed and packaged foods
- You can download the [FoodSwitch](#) app, which allows you to scan the barcode on packaged food products to find out the sodium content of the product. It will also give you options for healthier alternatives
- The Heart Foundation has a [sodium and salt converter](#) that easily allows you to convert the sodium listed on packaged foods into grams of salt, or vice versa.

### About the Victorian Salt Reduction Partnership

The Victorian Salt Reduction Partnership was established in 2014 in response to alarming high levels of salt consumption by the Victorian public. The partnership comprises of peak public health organisations: VicHealth, Heart Foundation (Victoria), Stroke Foundation, Kidney Health Australia, The Victorian Department for Health and Human Services, The George Institute for Global Health, and Deakin University. Australia is committed to meeting the World Health Organization's target of 30 percent reduction in average population salt intake by 2025. To achieve this, the partnership has developed a comprehensive set of actions aimed at gaining consensus and commitment for salt reduction action from governments, public and industry in Victoria.