



Media release

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When it comes to salt, you can't trust your taste buds

A new survey of over 800 Victorians has shown that most still don't understand the dangerous levels of salt being consumed, with over two-thirds claiming that they eat less or about the right amount of salt, but many unable to correctly identify high salt foods.

The survey results come as The Heart Foundation and VicHealth launch their "Don't Trust Your Taste Buds" campaign to urge Victorians to trust the label and not their taste buds when it comes to identifying hidden salt in processed foods.

Heart Foundation Victoria Chief Executive Officer Diana Heggie said the results from the survey showed that the campaign was urgently needed to help get the message out to Victorians.

"The World Health Organization recommends a maximum daily limit of 5g of salt each day for adults and 3g for children, but Victorian adults are consuming almost twice the upper limit.

"High salt consumption increases the risk of high blood pressure and the risk of cardiovascular disease including heart attack, stroke, kidney and blood vessel disease. Disturbingly, one in 20 deaths in Victoria is attributable to high salt intake - that's six times the annual road toll.

"About 75 per cent of salt in our diets comes from processed foods. Salt is hiding in the everyday foods we eat and even the most discerning taste buds often won't be able to taste it," Ms Heggie said.

This was reinforced when survey participants were asked to rank food products in order of salt content and on average only a quarter were able to correctly identify the food product with the highest salt content across the four food ranking tests.

Jerril Rechter, CEO of VicHealth, said she hoped the Don't Trust your Taste Buds campaign would help educate consumers about hidden salt to help save lives.

"The survey showed many people lack knowledge and confidence when it comes to reading nutrition labels and understanding how they can reduce their own salt intake.

"Worryingly, not one of the people in the survey managed to correctly identify the food product with the highest salt content in all four tests.

"Victorians think they know what they're doing when it comes to salt, but when it comes down to choosing foods - particularly at the supermarket checkout - they're not so savvy.

"About three quarters of the salt we eat comes from processed foods and yet the survey showed that two thirds of people think they're doing enough to manage their salt intake by not adding salt to their food or when they are cooking.

"We need consumers to understand that just because something doesn't taste salty, it doesn't mean it doesn't have salt in it. Salt is present in many common everyday foods like breads, cereals and sauces and it really is a hidden killer," Ms Rechter said.

Results of one question in the survey showed only 16 per cent of respondents were able to identify a serve of cornflakes and milk as having the highest salt content when compared to a 30g serve of popcorn, three chocolate and cream biscuits and 14 rice crackers.

"Your taste buds might not even taste the salt in the cornflakes, but they still contain plenty of salt (sodium). Foods that we think of as sweet are some of the biggest salt shockers – like pancakes, donuts and sweet sauces like barbecue and sweet chilli," said Ms Heggie.

"Other popular items like canned soups, deli meats and even family favourites like two minute noodles, baked beans and tinned spaghetti are stacked with salt.

"One of the worst offenders is a muffin which is a regular sweet treat – but one muffin can contain one quarter of an adult's maximum daily salt intake and over a third of a child's."

For more information about the campaign and for hints on how to reduce your salt consumption visit: www.dontrustyourtastebuds.com.au

Victorians can also download the [FoodSwitch](#) app, which you can use to scan the barcode on a food product and it will tell you the nutritional information of the product – including its salt content. It will also give you options for healthier alternatives.

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Note:

The online survey of 805 Victorian adults was conducted by the Heart Foundation in May 2016.