

## Media Release

**Embargoed until 00.01am 24 March 2016**

### Urine testing reveals Victorians are consuming a wee bit too much salt

New VicHealth and Deakin University research into salt attitudes and consumption patterns has revealed that Victorian adults are eating almost twice the daily recommended amount of salt despite less than one third of people considering their own salt intake to exceed dietary guidelines.

The *Victorian Consumer Survey of Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviours Related to Salt Intake*, commissioned by VicHealth and undertaken by Deakin University's Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research (C-PAN) surveyed 2398 adults aged 18-65 years and will be used as a baseline to assess change in adults over time.

Spot urine samples of a portion of survey participants surveyed at shopping centres in Melbourne and Geelong, estimated the average daily intake of salt was 9.6 grams per day in males and 7.9 grams per day in females.

These results are almost 70% higher than the World Health Organization's recommended daily intake of 5 grams per day for an adult.

The survey found:

- 84% of participants believed that Australians eat too much salt
- More than two thirds (76%) could identify salt from processed foods as being the main source of salt in the Australian diet
- 83% of participants were aware of the health risks associated with high salt intake
- Less than a third of participants (28%) believed their own individual salt intake exceeded dietary recommendations
- Of the 245 urine samples collected, the average daily intake of salt was 9.6 grams per day for males and 7.9 grams for females
- Only 28 per cent of participants could correctly identify the recommended maximum amount of salt to eat per day
- 47% said it was difficult to understand sodium information displayed on food labels
- 62% agreed there should be laws to limit the amount of salt added to manufactured foods
- In a sub-sample of 837 parents, 73% believed Australian children eat far too much or too much salt and 81% agreed that more action needs to be taken to reduce the amount of salt in foods targeted at children.

#### Media Contact

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The findings will be presented to Victorian MPs by Alfred Deakin Postdoctoral Fellow Dr Carley Grimes from C-PAN at a VicHealth and Heart Foundation Parliamentary breakfast in Melbourne this morning.

Dr Grimes said the survey showed there was a value in educating Victorians about salt.

“We found that most Victorians believed Australians are eating too much salt, but the majority did not believe their own individual salt intake was too high. This is despite our findings which showed on average males were eating 9.6 grams per day and females were eating 7.9 grams per day, which is much higher than the daily limit of 5 grams per day. There appears to be a mismatch between consumers understanding of how much salt they think they are eating and how much salt they are actually eating,” Dr Grimes said.

Dr Grimes said 35% of those surveyed were parents or caretakers of children under the age of 18 and answered additional questions in the survey.

“Overall, we found 75% of parents believed that Australian children eat too much salt and 70% felt that limiting the amount of salt in their child’s diet was important. There was also strong support for more action to be taken to reduce the amount of salt in foods targeted at children,” Dr Grimes said.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the research demonstrated that more needed to be done to educate consumers about salt.

“It’s crucial that governments, food manufacturers and public health bodies work together to reformulate food and improve food labelling to reduce salt intake and save lives,” Ms Rechter said.

“Worryingly, one in 20 deaths in Victoria is attributable to high salt intake. There is value in raising awareness about excessive salt intake, its presence in processed foods and in educating consumers about the dangers of a high salt diet.”

Last year the VicHealth published [The State of Salt action plan](#), with the Salt Reduction Strategic Partnership Group to strengthen health policies and partnership and develop new approaches to working with the food manufacturing industry.

For a copy of the research visit <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/victorian-consumer-salt-survey>

For information on Australian dietary guidelines visit [www.eatforhealth.gov.au](http://www.eatforhealth.gov.au).

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