

LOWER SODIUM, LONGER LIVES

One in three hypertension cases is due to high sodium intake.



1.3 billion adults aged 30-79 years have hypertension,¹ the leading preventable risk factor for cardiovascular disease



At least **1.9 million** people die each year because of eating too much sodium²



People on average consume **double the recommended** amount of sodium³



Up to \$19 could be saved for every \$1 spent on sodium reduction efforts⁴

Sodium reduction is:

- ✔ **Life-saving:** Globally, reducing sodium intake to less than 2 grams a day could save at least 1.9 million lives each year.²
- ✔ **Cost-saving:** For every \$1 spent on salt reduction, \$19 can be saved.⁴ Salt reduction is a World Health Organization NCD best buy and one of the most cost-effective ways to improve population health.
- ✔ **Gaining momentum:** As of 2021, 96 countries have introduced national salt reduction initiatives (a 28% increase since 2014).⁵
- ✔ **Urgent:** Without urgent mandatory action, high sodium consumption — and the deaths and health care costs that follow — will continue and potentially worsen.

Case study: United Kingdom

Between 2003-2014, the UK's nationwide salt reduction program led to a 19% reduction in population salt consumption, which coincided with a:



in stroke-related deaths



ischemic heart disease-related deaths



in population blood pressure⁶

1 WHO global report on hypertension: the race against a silent killer. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO

2 Global Burden of Disease Collaborative Network. Global Burden of Disease Study 2019 (GBD 2019). Seattle, United States: Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). 2020.

3 WHO global report on sodium intake reduction. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023. Licence: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO.

4 Nugent and Brouwer. Benefits and costs of the non-communicable disease targets for the post-2015 development agenda. Copenhagen Consensus Center. 2015

5 Santos et al. A systematic review of salt reduction initiatives around the world: a midterm evaluation of progress towards the 2025 global non-communicable diseases salt reduction target. Advances in Nutrition. 2021.

6 Song et al. Salt intake, blood pressure and cardiovascular disease mortality in England, 2003-2018. Journal of Hypertension. 2023.



A comprehensive, effective policy package targets all sources of salt

Packaged food

- ✓ **Salt targets for packaged foods** establish mandatory salt limits for specific food categories, which are lowered over time to allow industry to reduce salt gradually.
- ✓ **Front-of-package warning labels** indicate packaged foods high in salt and other unhealthy nutrients, making it easy for consumers to make healthier choices.
- ✓ **Restrictions on marketing unhealthy food** limit exposure, reduce unhealthy food preferences and behaviors, and incentivize industry to reformulate and market healthier products.
- ✓ **Fiscal policies**, including taxes on products high in sodium, sugar, or saturated fats, can discourage the purchase of unhealthy foods and encourage manufacturer reformulation. They are most effective when paired with subsidies for healthy foods.
- ✓ **Using a consistent Nutrient Profile Model across policies** can facilitate policy implementation and provide clearer incentives to consumers. Effective nutrient profile models have strict criteria and are based on strong scientific evidence.

Food consumed outside the home

- ✓ **Healthy public food procurement and service policies** set nutrition standards for food served or sold in public settings such as schools and hospitals, where millions of meals are consumed each day.

Food consumed at home

- ✓ **Potassium-enriched low-sodium salt substitutes** replace some of the sodium in salt (usually 25%) with potassium, and can be used in home cooking (as well as in prepared and packaged foods) without changing taste. Promoting these substitutes can lower blood pressure and reduce heart disease and stroke.
- ✓ **Mass media campaigns** can increase consumer awareness of the dangers of salt consumption and build public support for policies to address the population's high salt intake. Campaigns are more effective when in tandem with other interventions.

Case study: Colombia

Since 2022, Colombia has undertaken multiple synergistic regulatory actions to improve the packaged food environment, incentivizing and making it easier for people in Colombia to eat less salt.

- Front-of-package warning labels based on the PAHO Nutrient Profile Model
- Mandatory maximum sodium targets
- Mandatory back of pack sodium content declaration to enable monitoring
- Taxes on foods that carry a front-of-pack label

For more information, visit the [Resolve to Save Lives Sodium Reduction Resource Library](#)