



TO: Chair and Members of the Board of Health

FROM: Bryna Warshawsky, Acting Medical Officer of Health

DATE: 2103 April 18

SODIUM REDUCTION STRATEGY RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

Recommendation

It is recommended that Report No. 051-13 re “Sodium Reduction Strategy Resources and Activities” be received for information.

Key Points

- Canadians consume more than double the amount of their body’s sodium requirements. This leads to an increased risk of high blood pressure and other chronic illness.
- Middlesex-London data was used to plan a local Sodium Reduction Strategy, which includes:
 - Enhanced content on the Health Unit’s website regarding sodium;
 - Creative videos to draw consumers to the Health Unit’s website;
 - The development of a resource to promote best practices with regard to food skills for providers of these program;
 - Outreach to local primary care providers to support their resource and educational needs related to sodium reduction.

Background

All types of salt are composed of two minerals: sodium and chloride. The human body needs a small amount of sodium for absorption of nutrients, muscle and nerve activity, fluid balance and blood pressure regulation. However, too much sodium can be harmful. A high sodium intake increases the risk of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, stroke, kidney disease, osteoporosis, stomach cancer and asthma.

The average Canadian eats about 3400 mg of sodium per day, more than double the recommended amount. Healthy adults need only 1500 mg, and healthy children need only 1000-1500 mg of sodium per day. Approximately 77% of the sodium comes from processed foods and an estimated 11% is added during cooking or at the table.

Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) data collected in Middlesex-London from January to April 2012, confirmed that there is a gap in knowledge in the community about effective sodium reduction strategies for individuals and families (See Board of Health [Report No. 125-12](#) from October 2012). While over three quarters of respondents claimed to watch their sodium intake, only 35% reported the need to avoid or minimize consumption of processed foods such as prepared and canned foods. Health Unit Registered Dietitians have used the results of the RRFSS modules to inform the planning of a community- wide sodium reduction campaign. Based on the RRFSS data, residents aged 20 to 44 years old, particularly those with children, were chosen as the target audience for this campaign.

Health Unit Website

As part of the local Sodium Reduction Strategy, the Health Unit’s website materials were enhanced. The sodium awareness and reduction web content is engaging, concise and evidence-based. The information presents Facts and Myths, and highlights how to make lower sodium choices at the grocery store, at home and

when eating out. The website features information, interactive materials, recipes, shopping and cooking tips, Health Unit sodium videos and videos from other credible sources. An advocacy component will be incorporated into the website, with letters that individuals and organizations could adapt and send to politicians or influential stakeholders. Website visitors will also be asked questions about their sodium knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Sodium Videos

In 2012, Health Unit staff worked with Mr. Dan Flaherty, Manager, Communications, and the London-based communications company, Keyframe, to develop four 30-second videos. A non-traditional approach to capture audience attention was chosen. The videos feature a couple, named 'Marg and Harry' who engage in humorous conversation in reaction to television programming about sodium. The intent of the videos is to provide simple facts about sodium and to entice the viewer to visit the Health Unit's website to find out more about sodium reduction. These videos will be disseminated through a variety of mediums, including the Health Unit's YouTube channel. In September 2013, Health Unit Dietitians will feature 'sodium' on weekly Rogers Daytime show segments, focusing on cooking tips and recipe ideas for sodium reduction. At the same time, the four sodium awareness videos will be aired on local television in order to drive more traffic to the sodium information on the Health Unit's website.

Food Skills Best Practices

A comprehensive and evidence-based food skills resource is being developed for providers who offer food skills programs. This useable resource will integrate strengths from existing resources about menu planning, healthy eating on a budget, label reading, grocery shopping and meal preparation. It will incorporate the major healthy eating themes in public health nutrition: Canada's Food Guide principles; the importance of family meals; the promotion of vegetables and fruit; the reduction of trans and saturated fats; and sodium reduction. This resource will shape the way Health Unit staff deliver all food skills programming and will be shared or adapted for community partners who offer food skill programs.

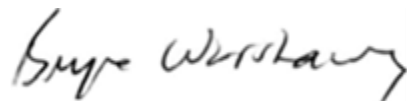
Health Professional Consultation

Local physicians and other primary care providers will be consulted to assess how they educate clients and families about sodium and to determine their educational and resource needs. The goal is to support primary care provider practice by developing and disseminating resources and providing education as requested.

Next Steps

Health Unit staff will continue to implement the Sodium Reduction Strategy as outlined above, with the goal of increasing knowledge about the food sources of sodium and ways to reduce sodium. The Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System data will again be collected from January to April 2014 to assess if there has been a change in knowledge about sodium reduction strategies.

This report was prepared by Ms. Ginette Blake, Ms. Kim Leacy and Ms. Christine Callaghan, Registered Dietitians, and Ms. Heather Lokko, Manager, Reproductive Health Team.



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<p>This report addresses the following requirement(s) of the Ontario Public Health Standards: Foundational Standard - 4, 8; Chronic Disease Prevention - 1, 7, 8, and 11.</p>
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