

Canadians support interventions to reduce dietary salt

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Many Canadians are concerned about dietary sodium and welcome government intervention to reduce sodium intake through a variety of measures, including lowering sodium in food, and education and awareness, according to a national survey. The top barriers to limiting sodium intake are a lack of lower sodium packaged and processed foods and lower sodium restaurant menu options.

"Canadians are supportive of [government intervention](#) to lower [salt intake](#)," says lead investigator Mary R. L'Abbe, PhD, Professor and Chair of the Department of [Nutritional Sciences](#) at University of Toronto, noting that most Canadians eat more than the recommended amount of sodium, increasing their risk of developing high blood pressure and other [cardiovascular conditions](#).

To combat high sodium in Canadian diets, a federal government-appointed multi-stakeholder Sodium Working Group developed, "A Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada," a formal set of recommendations that focus on the food supply, education and awareness, and research in order to lower the amount of sodium Canadians eat from an average 3,400 mg per day to 2,300 mg per day by 2016. The group also called for voluntary sodium reductions in the food industry coupled with regular monitoring of progress, which may be enforced through regulation should industry fail to reach targets.

To assess Canadians' concern about sodium, actions, and barriers in limiting sodium consumption, researchers from the University of

Toronto and University of Guelph conducted an online survey (<http://consumermonitor.ca>) with a representative sample of the Canadian population in terms of age, sex, province, and education.

In light of the proposed federal Bill C-460 – legislating the group's recommendations – investigators also sought to determine Canadians' level of support for a number of sodium reduction initiatives.

There was very high support for almost all types of [public health interventions](#) to lower sodium. Eighty percent of respondents would like the food industry to lower the amount of sodium in food. A large number supported setting maximum amounts of sodium in grocery and restaurant foods and for foods served in public settings like schools and hospitals. There was little support for taxation of high sodium foods or subsidizing lower sodium foods.

Among the 2,603 people surveyed, 67 percent were concerned about their sodium intake, especially older individuals and those with [high blood pressure](#).

Approximately half of the respondents were actively limiting their sodium intake. However, many thought they consumed low amounts of sodium because they did not add salt to their food. Others were not limiting their [sodium intake](#) because they had low or normal blood pressure and overall good health, contradicting the literature demonstrating benefits of sodium reduction in individuals with normal blood pressure. Only 16 percent of people knew the recommended intake for sodium (1,500 mg per day), and 12 percent knew the maximum amount that should be consumed (2,300 mg per day).

More information: "Results of a National Survey Examining Canadians' Concern, Actions, Barriers, and Support for Dietary Sodium Reduction Interventions," by JoAnne Arcand, PhD, RD, Julio Mendoza,

PhD, Ying Qi, MSc, Spencer Henson, PhD, Wendy Lou, PhD, and Mary R. L'Abbe, PhD, *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*, Volume 29/Issue 5 (May 2013), [DOI: 10.1016/j.cjca.2013.01.018](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cjca.2013.01.018)

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