

# Hong Kong's Action on Salt and Sugar Reduction

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# Sodium (Salt)

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# What are the adverse health effects of consuming food with high sodium (salt)?

## What is the health status of the local population?

- ▶ Dietary sodium (salt) intake is closely related to health. Excessive sodium(salt) intake will increase the risk of developing hypertension, stroke and coronary heart disease.
- ▶ According to the Report of Population Health Survey 2014/15 from the Department of Health (DH), the prevalence of hypertension was 27.7 per cent among persons aged 15-84.

# What are the recommendations of the World Health Organization on daily sodium intake?

## What is the target for our local population?

- ▶ The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends a maximum sodium intake of 2 000 milligrams daily (i.e. slightly less than 1 level teaspoon of salt) for adults and the average population intake of salt shall be reduced by a relative 30 per cent by 2025.
- ▶ Two grams of sodium means 5 grams of salt.
- ▶ According to the Report of Population Health Survey 2014/15 from the Department of Health (DH), persons aged 15-84 had a daily salt intake of 8.8g per day (~3,520 mg sodium). The vast majority (86.3%) of them had dietary salt intake above the WHO recommended daily limit.
- ▶ The <Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Noncommunicable Diseases in Hong Kong> published by the Government set a target, a 30 per cent relative reduction in mean population daily intake of salt/sodium by 2025.

## Does the Centre for Food Safety have priority in certain kinds of food for reduction of sodium (salt) content? And why?

- ▶ The results of the studies conducted by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) show that sauces and condiments, soups and bread are the major sources of sodium (salt) intake of the local population.
- ▶ Therefore, the CFS will liaise with the trade on reducing sodium (salt) in sauces and condiments, soups and bread with reference to the advice of the International Advisory Panel on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food and the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food, as well as the international experience in reducing dietary sodium (salt).

# What actions can the public take to reduce dietary intake of sodium (salt)?

- ▶ To avoid adverse health effects caused by excessive intake of sodium (salt), the public is advised to make careful choices, read nutrition labels and choose food with lower sodium content.
- ▶ In Hong Kong, under the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulation (Cap.132W), prepackaged food with “low sodium”, “very low sodium”, or “free sodium” claim must contain no more than 120 milligrams, 40 milligrams, or 5 milligrams of sodium respectively per 100 grams of food.
- ▶ The public could also change their dietary habits by reducing the amount of salt or sodium-containing seasonings added to food.
- ▶ They could use natural ingredients (e.g. garlic, ginger, lemon/lime juice, parsley) to replace seasonings and sauce which are high in salt (e.g. shrimp paste, salted black bean, chicken powder, oyster sauce). This can allow the taste buds to become accustomed to food with less salt.
- ▶ They are also advised to reduce the intake of processed food, e.g. preserved fish/vegetables/ meat, ham and sausage, salty snack food, and instant noodles, etc.

# Sugar

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# What are the adverse health effects of consuming food with high sugar?

## What is the health status of the local population?

- ▶ Consuming free sugars increases the risk of dental caries (tooth decay).
- ▶ Excess calories from food and drinks high in free sugars also contribute to unhealthy weight gain, which can lead to overweight and obesity.
- ▶ According to the Report of Population Health Survey 2014/15 from the Department of Health (DH), 50 per cent of the person aged between 15 and 84 were classified as overweight and obese.
- ▶ The Oral Health Survey 2011 released by DH shows that around half of the 5-year old children have tooth decay experience.



# What are the recommendations of the World Health Organization on daily sugar intake?

- ▶ In March 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued a new set of guidelines with two strong recommendations:
  - (i) a reduced intake of free sugars throughout the lifecourse; and
  - (ii) in both adults and children, reduce the intake of free sugars to less than ten per cent of total energy intake. This translates into less than about 50 grams of free sugars (about 10 sugar cubes) per day for someone having a 2000-Kcal diet.
- ▶ The WHO also makes a conditional recommendation and suggests a further reduction of the intake of free sugars to below five per cent of total energy intake.
- ▶ Free sugars refer to monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates.

# Does the Centre for Food Safety have priority in certain kinds of food for reduction of sugar content? And why?

- ▶ The results of the studies conducted by the Centre for Food Safety (CFS) show that non-alcoholic beverages is the major source of sugar intake of the local population.
- ▶ Yet, sugar in these drinks only increase the risk of overweight, obesity and dental caries but have little nutritional value.
- ▶ Therefore, the CFS will liaise with the trade on reducing sugar in non-alcoholic beverages, with reference to the advice of the International Advisory Panel on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food and the Committee on Reduction of Salt and Sugar in Food, as well as the international experience in reducing dietary sugar.

# What actions can the public take to reduce dietary intake of sugar?

- ▶ To avoid adverse health effects caused by excessive intake of sugar, the public is advised to make careful choices, read nutrition labels and choose food with lower sugar content.
- ▶ In Hong Kong under the Food and Drugs (Composition and Labelling) Regulation (Cap.132W), prepackaged food with “low sugars” or “no sugars” claim must contain no more than 5 grams or 0.5 grams of sugars respectively per 100 grams of solid/liquid food.
- ▶ The public could also change their dietary habits by cutting down on food with excessive sugar.
- ▶ They could replace confectionaries, desserts and drinks (e.g. cake, chocolate, sweets, soft drinks, 3 in 1 tea or coffee, fruit juice) with fruits, sugar free sweets, sugar free soft drinks, Chinese tea, and drinking water. This can allow the taste buds to become accustomed to food with less sugar.

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