



NEWS RELEASE

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New Dietary Guidelines on Salt Drastic, Simplistic, Unrealistic

The federal government's new Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released Monday, drastically reduces sodium as a way to combat hypertension, ignoring recent research that suggests obesity, not salt, is the main culprit in rising blood pressure rates.

The guidelines, if followed, could have negative unintended health consequences. A recent Harvard study links low-salt diets to an increase in insulin resistance, the condition that is a precursor to Type 2 Diabetes. What's more, some nutritionists predict the guidelines will worsen, not improve, the obesity crisis because people will consume more calories just to satisfy their innate salt appetite.

"These guidelines are a classic example of 'Ready, Fire, Aim' by the federal food police," said Lori Roman, president of the Salt Institute, which represents the salt industry. "While increasing obesity and hypertension rates are health concerns we can all share, it's simplistic and dangerous to attack salt, an essential nutrient."

The thesis behind the sodium guidelines is that Americans are eating more salt, which is increasing blood pressure rates. But a September 2010 paper published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition by two Harvard researchers shows that while hypertension has increased among Americans over the last 40 years sodium has remained virtually unchanged. The findings were a shock to some in the medical community who assumed increasing salt intake has been the main driver in population-wide hypertension.

"If high blood pressure increased significantly but salt consumption did not, then it is obvious that the Dietary Guidelines regarding salt are baseless," said Morton Satin, vice president of science and research at the Salt Institute. "There is no scientific research indicating that population-wide sodium reduction will lead to better overall health – on the contrary, available clinical research predicts several negative consequences across all age groups."

Recent research (Can Dietary Sodium Intake be Modified by Public Policy? David A. McCarron, Joel C. Geerling, Alexandra G. Kazaks, Judith S. Stern) involving data collected from more than 19,000 individuals in 33 countries showed that healthy humans consume sodium within a relatively narrow range of 2700 mg to 4900 mg a day. The new US Dietary Guidelines recommending only 1,500 mg of sodium per day for most adults, would, if followed, would make the United States the only modern society with salt consumption that low.

The guidelines recommend daily sodium intake of less than 2,300 mg and 1,500 mg among persons who are 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. The 1,500 mg recommendation applies to about half of the U.S. population, including children, and the majority of adults.

About the Salt Institute

The Salt Institute is the world's foremost source of authoritative information about salt (sodium chloride). The Institute is a North American-based non-profit salt industry trade association dedicated to advocating responsible uses of salt, particularly to ensure winter roadway safety, quality water and healthy nutrition. The Institute was founded in 1914 and consists of the leading salt companies in the world.