



Subject: Food Standards Agency Salt Awareness Campaign.

On Monday 13 September 2004, the Food Standards Agency launched a major public health campaign to tackle excessive salt consumption. The aim of the campaign is to help reduce the 170,000 deaths a year in England where high blood pressure is a cause or contributing factor. The British Dietetic Association supports the campaign, is a key stakeholder, and will be more closely involved in associated activities to be launched in 2005.

The awareness campaign is part of an overall salt reduction strategy to improve public health, which includes:

- Working with industry to reduce the salt content of processed foods
- Improved labelling to assist informed choice by consumers
- Information geared to help consumers become aware of the risks of consuming too much salt.

The campaign will be high profile and involve messages on television, in the press and on posters. Further information on salt will be available on downloadable factsheets from the campaign website (see below) and via consumer leaflets. Don't forget that the British Dietetic Association has produced a consumer fact sheet about salt, which can be downloaded from the BDA website.

Research commissioned by the FSA has shown that there is a low level of public understanding about the relationship between salt and health. Therefore the FSA campaign is based on raising awareness and understanding over time to encourage informed consumer choice that leads to improved public health.

The first phase of the campaign will run from September to November 2004. It aims to move consumers on from broad knowledge that consuming too much salt is bad for their health to a better awareness of why and how it can affect them. The main message is:

- Too much salt is bad for your heart

Secondary messages are:

- It causes high blood pressure leading to risk of heart disease and stroke
- The recommended average intake of salt is 6g a day (about a teaspoon)

To help consumers reduce their salt intake, the FSA and Health Departments are working with industry to agree salt reduction targets across different food categories, with specific measurable commitments, capable of delivering the Agency's target of 6g of salt per person per day by 2010.

The current reductions to salt levels by the food industry are being undertaken voluntarily but the FSA will be undertaking regular surveys to monitor the amount of salt in everyday foods in order to verify claimed reductions and to inform consumers. The FSA is also in discussion with the four UK Health Departments about arrangements to monitor salt intakes as consumers and industry take action to achieve reductions.

Improved labelling is an important part of the overall salt reduction strategy.

The public awareness campaign has the support of a wide range of industry, public health and consumer stakeholders who will be reinforcing the key campaign messages. This includes the British Dietetic Association who have been working with the FSA and involved with developments. The BDA's involvement will become more tangible in 2005, during the second phase of the campaign, which will focus more on practical advice for helping consumers to reduce their salt intake.

Further information about salt and the Food Standards Agency's public health campaign can be found on the dedicated website: www.salt.gov.uk