



Canadian Stroke Network

Réseau canadien contre
les accidents cérébrovasculaires



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Reducing salt intake would eliminate hypertension in one million Canadians *Study also suggests \$430M annual savings in health costs*

EMBARGOED TO 12:01 AM EST, MAY 8, 2007 - OTTAWA, ON: Cutting the average Canadian's salt intake by half would eliminate hypertension (high blood pressure) in one million Canadians, double the number of Canadians with adequately controlled hypertension, and save the health-care system \$430 million a year, according to a study released today by the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Stroke Network, and published in the May issue of *Canadian Journal of Cardiology*.

The new Canadian study investigates for the first time the contribution that excess consumption of dietary sodium is making to the development of high blood pressure and hypertension in Canadians.

A quarter of adults, about five million Canadians, have hypertension and more than 9 in 10 Canadians are estimated to develop high blood pressure if they live an average lifespan of about 80 years.

Hypertension expert Dr. Norm Campbell, one of the study authors, says that "Canadians are unwittingly consuming far more than the Tolerable Upper Intake Level of sodium. Reducing sodium additives to food is an excellent way to significantly improve the health of Canadians and reduce health costs. Politicians trying to address rising health care costs and sicker patients need to pay attention."

"Physician visits and laboratory costs would decrease by 6.5 per cent and 23-per-cent fewer treated hypertensives would require medications for control of blood pressure" if Canadians reduced their sodium intake by an average of 1840 milligrams a day, the study says. "Changes to reduce sodium added to food in processing may represent an opportunity to more rapidly improve public health."

"This analysis reveals that the hidden salt in processed foods is a major cause of the high blood pressure that leads to stroke and coronary heart disease," says Dr. Kevin Willis of the Canadian Stroke Network.

A recent Statistics Canada survey found that adult Canadians consume on average 3100 milligrams a day of sodium in the processed foods they eat - about 35% more than the Tolerable Upper Intake level, and more than twice the amount considered adequate for health. An additional 10 to 20 per cent of salt is added in cooking and at the table.

"The Heart and Stroke Foundation will continue to work with government, industry and other health partners to reduce sodium in our foods, and to remind Canadians of the link between nutrition and risk factors for heart disease and stroke," says Stephen Samis, director of health policy for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada. "We truly are what we eat."
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Hypertension is a major risk factor for both stroke and heart disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates hypertension to be the leading risk factor for death in the world. According to WHO, reduction in dietary sodium would be an important policy to improve global health. In *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*, Health Canada recommends that Canadians reduce their sodium intake.

The Canadian Stroke Network and the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada have called for increased awareness about the health risks associated with sodium consumption. They are among participants in a national steering committee that is working with the food industry to reduce sodium levels in processed foods.

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The Heart and Stroke Foundation (www.heartandstroke.ca), a volunteer-based health charity, leads in eliminating heart disease and stroke and reducing their impact through the advancement of research and its application, the promotion of healthy living, and advocacy.

Specific tools and information on reducing and managing hypertension can be found at www.heartandstroke.ca/bp.

About the Canadian Stroke Network (www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca)

The Canadian Stroke Network includes more than 100 of Canada's leading scientists and clinicians from 24 universities who work collaboratively on various aspects of stroke. The Network, which is headquartered at the University of Ottawa, also includes partners from industry, the non-profit sector, provincial and federal governments. The Canadian Stroke Network, one of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence, is committed to reducing the physical, social and economic impact of stroke on the lives of individual Canadians and on society as a whole.

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