

Published in hard copy and on the web at www.saltmatters.org

The business address of the Salt Skip Program is Queensland Hypertension Association
PO Box 193, Holland Park, QLD 4121, phone (07) 3899 1659, FAX (07) 3394 7815.

Wanted—a lot more low salt foods

Stalemate in supply/demand

The stalemate in supply and demand is that consumers can only see a poor supply, while the food industry can only see a poor demand.

A vicious circle of poor supply and poor demand seems likely to persist until something or somebody breaks it. The challenge is to work out the best way to break it.

The food industry may well say it has tried harder than the consumers have. It has been testing the market ever since 1980, and from the industry's viewpoint the consumer response has been pathetic.

A good example was no-added-salt Ryvita—loved by Salt Skippers but discontinued by shops that had found it too difficult to sell.

What are the problems?

- The main suppliers have to sell through supermarkets to survive;
- Their low profit margins need a high turnover;
- Niche markets must get bigger or get nowhere;
- Health claims like 'no added salt' and 'reduced salt' relegate foods to a niche market—a market that many shoppers may avoid.

What are the solutions?

- We need many more low salt foods such as Kellogg Just Right Original (sodium 30 mg/100g);
- Low salt foods must compete on their merits, like Red Kelly Salad

Dressing, with no nutritional claim, yet with sodium at only 2 mg/100g.

It may be easier than it looks

Curry pastes, salad dressings, sundried tomatoes and breakfast cereals can be delicious when low in salt. In 1997 Kellogg Just Right had a sodium content of 600 mg/100g in the UK, and 284 mg/100g in Australia. In 1998 Kellogg (Aust) reduced it to 49 mg/100g and then to 30 mg/100g with a steady rise in sales—from 6th to 4th place in the list of the Top 10 best-selling ready-to-eat breakfast cereals published by *Retail World*.

The industry sells most foods in three salt categories:

- 'normal' (high salt);
- reduced salt;
- no added salt

But the National Health & Medical Research Council prescribes **low salt foods** (sodium up to 120 mg/100g). It prescribes them for **everybody**, and now is the time for 20 million Australians to hear that and buy them.

We can all read the label and (with the reservations on page 3) the Nutritional Information Panel is all we need to see.

A Hobart consumer group is working on the practicalities and is very happy to receive advice sent to the addresses on page 4.

Time for another update on iodine

The story so far

Severe iodine deficiency may lead to the birth of a cretin—a child with severe and incurable mental retardation—but milder deficiency causing goitre was not taken seriously until recently, as swelling was the only symptom and was curable.

We now know that mild deficiency can impair the mental development of the unborn child and young infant **even without goitre**. Average IQ in affected districts may be 15 points below normal. With the new WHO standards based on urinary iodine excretion, surveys have found low rates in NSW and Victoria as well as Tasmania. An Australian national survey is underway.

Current advice—Australian public

- It is essential for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and young children to have enough iodine. Mineral and vitamin supplements for use in pregnancy and breastfeeding must contain iodine.
- Everyone else should take mineral and vitamin supplements containing iodine or use iodised salt.

Current advice—Salt Skip Program

- Our advice for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers is the same as above.
- We advise everyone else to take mineral and vitamin supplements or use potassium iodide drops, either as a mineral supplement or as an additive in their home-made bread, as recommended below.

Why iodised salt is a health hazard

Salt is iodised with 25–65 micrograms (mcg) of iodine per gram (average 45 mcg). A level metric teaspoonful of salt weighs 5.4 grams, so a quarter teaspoon (1.35 g) might contain 34–88 (average 60) mcg of iodine but would definitely

contain **23 mmol** of sodium.



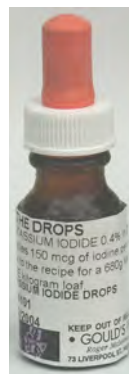
That is excessive. The National Health & Medical Research Council has proposed an upper limit of **70 mmol/day** from all sources **for the whole adult population**, based on clear evidence that more is harmful. It is silly to use one-third of the sodium ration just to carry iodine.

Tasmania gives its population iodine (as it did in the 1960s) with iodised bread containing 15 mcg per slice. Salt skippers can iodise their salt free bread at the same rate with 0.4% potassium iodide drops, at 2 drops for a small loaf (680g) and 3 drops for a one-kg loaf.

Potassium iodide drops

The Hobart Friendly Care Pharmacy, 103 Liverpool Street, Hobart, TAS 7000, sells these drops over the counter and will accept mail orders at the following prices to any address in Australia:

- **Breadmaking**—0.4% potassium iodide drops in 15 mL dropper bottles (150 mcg per drop) \$5.00 (post-free);
- **Oral iodine supplement**—0.2% potassium iodide drops in 30 mL dropper bottles (75 mcg per drop) \$6.50 (post-free). The difference in price is due to the cost of the bottles.



MAIL ORDER DETAILS

The phone number is (03) 6234 1553, FAX (03) 6234 1669. The pharmacist who deals with potassium iodide drops is John Sajn (pronounced SAHN), email jsajnhfcp@netspace.net.au

Food labels—a minefield of misinformation



A salt skipper who used to love olives found a green olive paste with **sodium zero (!!!)** and the ingredient list was simply **olives (93%), extra virgin olive oil**. It made sense that you were told to refrigerate it after opening and consume it within 7 days.

The strong flavour of green olives was delicious on toast, but his wife could taste salt. Eric Johnson (Tasmanian State Food Officer) agreed. On analysis the sodium content was **1430 mg/100g** and the European label (in grams) should have shown it as 1.43 g/100g. How could an export company make such a colossal blunder?

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Serving per package 5,5		Serving size 90g
	Average per serving	Average quantity per 100g
Energy	1178,7 Kj	1310,3 Kj
Protein	1,3 g	1,4 g
Fat total	28,9 g	32,1 g
- saturated	0,7 g	0,8 g
Carbohydrate	4,2 g	4,6 g
- sugar	0,0 g	0,0 g
Sodium	0,0 g	0,0 g

Why are serious mistakes so common?

1. Ingredients packed in brine

An Australian horseradish sauce with 'no added salt' and no taste of salt declared a sodium content of 924 mg/100g, which was revised to 25 mg/100g (Salt Skip News 124, August 2003). The first label quoted food tables that gave the sodium content of horseradish packed in brine, and the second was for fresh horseradish. Conversely the Italian factory used olives preserved in brine but declared the sodium content of fresh green olives (3 mg/100g, or 0.0 g/100g).

2. Decimal conversion

Imported gourmet foods are the worst offenders, especially imports from The Netherlands and Italy, and every mistake so far has been in the reverse direction—bad news, and usually very bad news. Europe repeatedly mistakes a gram for 100 milligrams, and converts 0.4g/100g on the European label into 40 mg/100g for the Australian label. But 0.4 g = 400 mg of course.

When salt is high on the ingredient list 40 mg must be wrong, but no importers have yet understood the problem until a letter from the Tasmanian government has given them the chemical analysis and the choice of discontinuing the import or making it true to label.

SALT SKIP NEWS
No 135

June 2005

Page 4 of 4

The academic
address of the Salt
Skip Program is

GPO Private Bag 23
Hobart, TAS 7001
Australia

PHONE:
61-3-6226-7708

FAX:
61-3-6226-7704

email
salt.matters@utas.edu.au

We are on the Web at
www.saltmatters.org

Salt Skip News will
continue to be distributed
in hard copy.

Chicken stock and chicken/pumpkin soup

Instant chicken stock. Use Salt Skip Chicken Stock Powder, available from health food shops or by mail order from Eumarrah Wholefoods (*Salt Matters* page 255) or Spice World (page 257).

Real chicken stock is also easy but takes longer—simmer a chicken carcass in a big pot of water for an hour. Refrigerate and skim off the fat. Good cooks add flavour by frying or roasting chicken pieces beforehand and adding fresh or dried oregano (but avoiding strongly flavoured herbs like tarragon or sage). Chicken wings make the stock more gelatinous.

Chicken soup with pumpkin

2 cups cooked mashed pumpkin
1¼ cups skim milk
2½ cups NAS chicken stock
3 Tbs dry vermouth (optional)
¼ tsp ground nutmeg
¼ tsp chilli powder (optional)
250g cooked chicken, cubed
chopped parsley

Mix pumpkin, milk and stock and bring to boil, stirring often, then simmer 5 minutes with a lid on. Add vermouth and spices, simmer another 10 minutes, add chicken and simmer another 10 minutes. Serve garnished with chopped parsley.

Serves 6

Apple soup

6 large Granny Smith apples
peeled, cored and quartered
2 cm cinnamon stick
grated rind of one lemon
4 cups water
1 cup dry white wine
1 cup skim milk yoghurt

Cook apples, cinnamon and lemon rind in the water until soft. Blend or process until smooth, stir in the wine, bring to the boil again and simmer 5 minutes. Stir in yoghurt, mix well and refrigerate. Serve topped with a little red currant jelly.

Serves 6

An instructive experiment with calcium glutamate

The volume of the chicken soup is about 1.5 litres (1500 mL) so you can add 15 mL of calcium glutamate (1%) for extra flavour. That is three level metric teaspoons (3 x 5 mL). Calcium glutamate has the greatest effect on the soup made with real chicken stock, less effect on the other chicken soup and no effect at all on sweet foods like apple soup. Glutamates occur naturally in savoury foods including tomatoes and mushrooms, and adding more will increase their flavour, but only up to a limit. Above 1% by volume they have no more effect and would only be wasted. The stock made with Salt Skip Stock Powder already contains flavour enhancers that compete with glutamates.

You can get calcium glutamate by mail order from Eumarrah Wholefoods (*Salt Matters* page 255). For prices see Salt Skip News 134 on www.saltmatters.org

BP Monitor with Salt Skip News is published every 2 months, from February to December (6 issues a year).

Salt Skip Editorial Committee: Assoc Prof Michael Stowasser (Head, Hypertension Unit, University Dept. Medicine, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane), Assoc Prof Caryl Nowson (Nutrition & Dietetics, Deakin University), Clare Rawcliffe (Cardiology Dietitian, St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney), Assoc Prof Malcolm Riley (Nutrition & Dietetics, Dept. Medicine, Monash University, Melbourne), Jane Brown (Home Economist, Salt Skip Program, Hobart). Text drafted by Dr Trevor Beard (Senior Research Fellow, Menzies Research Institute, Hobart). Hard copy printed by SNAP Printing, Edward Street, Brisbane.