



Reducing salt in foods produced in Belgium

Belgian Heart League report on the national conference of 23/09/2013

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1. NATIONAL CONFERENCE - Monday, September 23, 2013

Under the EuroHeart II project and in collaboration with the National Nutrition and Health Plan, the Belgian Heart League organized a national conference to disseminate issues contained in "Diet, Physical Activity and Cardiovascular Disease Prevention in Europe", recognized by the health and food industry actors in Belgium.

The conference initiated by the Belgian Heart League focused on **the reduction of salt in foods produced in Belgium**. This is a continuation of "Stop the salt", which was launched in
2009 by the Federal Nutrition and Health Plan in partnership with the Belgian Heart League.
To recap, the **National Nutrition and Health Plan** has a plan spanning from 2006 to 2010 in
order to "improve eating habits and increase physical activity for better health, and reduce
the incidence of preventable diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol,
hypertension, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer, etc."

⇒ **Goal**: reduction of sodium intake with a substitution of salt by iodine-fortified salt

⇒ Purpose:

- Reduce the population's salt intake to a maximum of 6 grams per day to decrease the incidence of hypertension and related diseases (heart attack), and to reduce the risk of stomach cancer and osteoporosis.
- Replace table salt with iodized salt at home, in bread, in restaurants and in canteens
 to correct iodine deficiency among the Belgian population.

Studies (INTERSALT PURE STUDY, etc.) prove that excess salt can cause hypertension, which can be a root cause of cardiovascular disease.

In the **Belgian** workforce, it is estimated that 33% of men and 25% of women have hypertension, and the vast majority are not aware of their disease. We also know that the risk of hypertension increases with age: it is estimated that 74% of men over 55 have hypertension.

In addition, more than 50% of patients who are treated still do not achieve the recommended blood pressure values.³

¹ Duprez D et al. Journal of Human Hypertension 2002;16;47-52.

² Fagard RH et al. Journal of Human Hypertension 2002;20:1297-1302.

³ Duprez D et al. Journal of Human Hypertension 2002;16;47-52.

This report arises from the European Heart Health Strategy II project which has received co-funding from the European Union, in the framework of the Health Program. Sole responsibility for this report lies with the organizer; the Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained herein.

Cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases constitute **the number one problem** in Belgium, responsible annually for over one third of all deaths of which 10% occur among patients under 65 years of age.

CAUSES

In most cases, hypertension is "idiopathic", i.e. without a known cause. It results from the interaction of genetic and environmental factors:

- **Heredity**: having hypertensive parents (father, mother or both) increases the risk of developing hypertension.
- **Age**: the risk of developing hypertension increases with age. It is estimated that 74% of men over 55 years have hypertension.
- Gender: before 50 years, more men are hypertensive than women. Women are more affected from the menopause onwards.
- **Lifestyle**: overweight or obesity, too much salt in the diet, alcohol abuse, sedentary lifestyle and lack of physical exercise are factors that facilitate the development of hypertension.
- Stress causes surges in blood pressure rather than being the cause of hypertension.

Consequences of hypertension

In general, untreated hypertension increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

- High blood pressure accelerates ageing of the arteries and increases cardiac work.

 The older an artery is, the more it may be damaged or become clogged: this is called atherosclerosis.
- When the artery wall thickens in the heart, it increases the risk of myocardial infarction, arrhythmia or cardiac decompensation.
- When arteries become clogged or rupture in the brain, a stroke (cerebrovascular accident) can occur, which may cause paralysis or death.
- By disrupting the mechanism of kidney filtration, hypertension can result in kidney failure, which can lead to dialysis.

More specifically...

Hypertension is related to genetic factors, about which we have little concrete information, but also to the environment. Ensuring the maintenance of a healthy, balanced lifestyle is actually not that complicated.

Most people do not know they are hypertensive. In addition, the vast majority of people with hypertension and treated with drug therapy still do not achieve the recommended blood pressure goals!

The information campaign, launched in 2009 in collaboration with the Belgian Heart League, comes in three forms: a **leaflet**, printed in a million copies, which was distributed in the month of May 2009 in supermarkets, pharmacies and by health insurance companies; a **salinometer**, a small pocket tool for measuring the salt content in products by multiplying the rate of natrium indicated on the label; and a **website** full of practical advice, which also seeks to nullify the great myths that revolve around salt.





The stated objective of the FPS for Public Health is twofold:

- 1. Reduce the salt intake of the population to a maximum of 6 grams per day and replace it with iodized salt.
- 2. Coordination and monitoring of the evolution of the salt content in foods.

Different federations in the bakery sector in Belgium have already pledged to replace regular salt with iodized salt in bread. This is a simple measure, which does not alter the taste or the production process, and increases the required amount of iodine through the consumption of this staple food. An agreement on this subject between the bread sector and the FPS Public Health was signed on April 2.

The distribution sectors (Fedis in particular) are also committed to reducing the amount of salt in food distributed under their own brand. "However, 25% of salt consumed is added directly by the consumer; we must act to break this habit; hence, the importance of the national awareness campaign", the FPS Public Health reiterates.

2. PROGRAMME

1.30 pm	Press reception	
	Coffee	
2 pm – 2.15 pm	Introduction	
	Speech by the Federal Minister of Public Health, Laurette Onkelinx	
2.15 pm - 2.30	From 2009 to today: salt in the food industry	
pm	Dominique Michel, Managing Director of Comeos	
2.30 pm – 3 pm	Educate and inform: adapting food labelling	
	Chris Moris, Managing Director of FEVIA	
3 pm – 3.30 pm	Salt and cardio-cerebrovascular diseases	
	Dr Freddy Van de Casseye, President-General Manager of the Belgian	
	Heart League	
3.30 pm – 4 pm	Questions and answers	
4 pm - 5 pm	Coffee	

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3. PRESS RELEASE

In 2013, food made in Belgium contained less salt than some years ago. This decrease is the result of a successful collaboration between the Belgian food industry, the retail industry and the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, under the Federal Nutrition and Health Plan.

The reduction was witnessed especially in meat products (-16 % to 36%), various kinds of bread (-22%), powdered soups (-17%), prepared foods (-15% to -29 %) and cheese (from -7.5 % to -20 %). The reduction was made gradually so that consumers would not notice.

The food industry federation (FEVIA) and the federation of commerce and services (COMEOS) undertook to reduce salt in the food products they manufacture on a voluntary basis. They did so at the request of the FPS Public Health, which since 2009 has developed a comprehensive strategy for reducing the population's salt intake. This strategy is not just about consultation with the food industry, bakers, the HORECA sector, etc., but also increasing the awareness of the general public, for example with the "Stop the Salt" campaign.

In the near future FPS Public Health will conduct a quantitative study on the population's salt intake through urine analysis to study the effects of the strategy on the salt intake.

The problem with salt is the sodium, a substance that is responsible for high blood pressure or hypertension. This condition can lead to cardiovascular diseases, which are still responsible for the majority of deaths in our country. Because most people have no symptoms and do not know they have hypertension, this disease is also called "the silent killer".

As a consumer, you can reduce your salt intake by checking the sodium content on the labels of food products, but also more simply by using your salt shaker less. And if you eat salt, preferably consume iodized salt to ensure an adequate intake of iodine.

From 23 to 29 September 2013, the Belgian Heart League is organising the Heart Week. The theme for this year is to eat better and exercise for fun and for the heart, remembering that simple, everyday choices that reduce salt intake have a major impact on our heart's health. The top five categories of products responsible for salt intake are listed in the table below.

	Decrease between 2004 and 2012
1. Bread and cereals	22% (various types of bread)
2. Meat and cured meat	16-36% (cured meat)
	8-28% (meat preparations)

3. Sauces, spices and condiments	10-29% (sauces)
4. Soups	4-27% (liquid soups)
	17% (powdered soups)
5. Dairy	7.5-20% (cheese)

4. LIST OF SPEAKERS

Federal Minister of Public Health, Laurette Onkelinx



Laurette Onkelinx studied law at the University of Liège and practised as a lawyer for over 10 years. At 30, she became an MP. In 1991, she chaired the House of Commons Justice Committee, and also held the position of Vice-President. In 1992, she became Federal Minister responsible for Social Integration, Public Health and the Environment before finishing the legislature as Minister-President of the French Community. In 1999, she became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Employment. Adopted by Brussels, in 1999 she was appointed president of Beliris, the Cooperation Agreement between the Federal State and the Region of Brussels-Capital.

From July 2003 to December 2007, she continued her commitment to the federal government as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice. From December 2007 to December 2011, she held the position of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health in the interim government "Verhofstadt III", then the governments "Leterme I"," Van Rompuy I" and "Leterme II". In the government "Di Rupo I", established on 6 December 2011, she holds the position of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health.

Dominique Michel, Managing Director of Comeos



Managing Director

Comeos

Retail sector; March 2008 - present (5 years 8 months); Brussels, Belgium

Head, Multinational Enterprises Program

International Labour Office (ILO)

Non-profit; 1,001-5,000 employees; international affairs sector; November 2006 - February 2008 (1 year 4 months); Geneva, Switzerland

Secretary General

Agoria

Non-profit; 51-200 employees; mechanical or industrial engineering industry; January 1999 - October 2006 (7 years 10 months); Brussels, Belgium

Special Assistant to the Executive Director of the United Nations Office for Project Services

United Nations

Non-profit; 10,000 employees; international affairs sector; January 1995 - January 1999 (4 years 1 month); New York, USA

European Adviser

Deutsche Telekom

December 1993 - December 1994 (1 year 1 month); Bonn, Germany

Chris Moris, Managing Director of FEVIA



Personal details

Chris Moris obtained a law degree at the University of Louvain in 1977.

Professional career

Chris Moris started his professional career at the Belgian sugar industry federation. Following many years of experience he acquired more responsibilities in the field of social affairs, food law, agricultural policy and the environment until he was asked in 1996 to join the umbrella organization of the food industry, FEVIA.

Since May 1999, Chris Moris has been general manager of FEVIA, defending the interests of the food industry before numerous official bodies, workers unions and interprofessional employers' organizations at national and international level.

Dr Freddy Van de Casseye, Belgian Heart League



Qualifications: doctor in medicine, Free University of Brussels

Function – Position within the organization:

President-General Manager Belgian Heart League

Name of the Organization: Belgian Heart League

Relevant Experience

Freddy Van de Casseye has a background as a general practitioner in Brussels from 1981 to 1991.

After this first clinical experience he joined the pharmaceutical industry in several multinational companies (Glaxo Wellcome Belgium, Merck

Darmstadt Benelux and AstraZeneca International). He was mainly involved in the clinical development of new drugs in different therapeutic areas and disease management programs. His last function covered the worldwide management of late phase clinical trials within AstraZeneca International.

The last nine years have been fully dedicated to the management and development of the Belgian Heart League (www.liguecardiologique.be – www.cardiologischeliga.be), a non-profit organization founded in 1968 with the objective of reducing the burden of cardiovascular diseases in Belgium. He is a member of the European Heart Network and the World Heart Federation.

5. SUMMARY OF THE CONFERENCE

Minister Laurette Onkelinx

Salt reduction is an important issue in terms of public health. Indeed, excess salt is a risk factor for hypertension which is responsible for serious cardiovascular events. Two million Belgians have hypertension and more than half of them are unaware of their condition. A study by the Institute of Public Health in 2009 showed that Belgians consume an average of 10.45 grams of salt each day, while the WHO recommends no more than 5 grams of salt; therefore we consume nearly twice the maximum daily dose. This is too much for our health. In addition, most of the salt we eat (70%) comes from prepared foods such as bread, meat preparations, cold and hot sauces, soups, cheeses, pastries and biscuits, and smoked seafood.

It was therefore important that our nutritional policy adopted effective tools to reduce salt intake among citizens. In 2009, I made a commitment with private partners to reduce the amount of salt in products consumed in addition to the changes related to eating habits of citizens through information campaigns (less salty food choices and reducing the use of salt) to achieve a reduction of at least 10% of the population's salt intake by late 2012. To do this, a "Reducing salt" working group was established at the FPS Public Health with all private partners involved in the food industry and most of its sub-sectors, the retail industry, the fries-makers' association, the Horeca Vlaanderen Federation and scientific experts from different universities. This group helped define the reformulation efforts for each category of food product manufactured in Belgium on a voluntary basis. Salt reduction thus relates to the entire food chain. Each sub-sector has worked within the technological and sensory limits to reduce the salt content of its products. Thus, salt content since 2004 (year of the survey on eating habits, which served as a baseline for the salt content of different food products) has continued to fall for a significant number of commodities, as the representatives of FEVIA and COMEOS will explain in a few minutes. I am therefore pleased to say that today, thanks to a fruitful collaboration, food products manufactured in Belgium are less salty than in 2004 and Belgians consume on average 600 grams less salt, or 2.4 kg of

salt per year in 2013 versus 3 kg in 2004. This is very good news for the health of every citizen.

Meanwhile, the Federal Health Nutrition Plan in partnership with the Heart League launched an information campaign about the importance of adapting daily salt intake called "Stop the Salt". The campaign was supported by a website containing myths and facts about salt, a small leaflet with handy tips and tricks and a sodium-salt converter to see whether the food we consume contains high or low levels of salt. To date, more than a million leaflet have been distributed and they continue to be available on demand on the "Stop the Salt" website.

At the end of this year, a new population study will be conducted to assess the level of salt consumption compared to 2009 and to see if it has actually declined by the expected 10%. I will certainly come back to you with the results.

In addition, we also started a working group, similar in structure to that for salt, to reduce sugar levels in food.

We need to continue our efforts in the future with relevant partners without forgetting that we work in a European economy and that many of the products we consume in Belgium are produced abroad.

It is now my pleasure to relinquish the floor to Dr Freddy Van de Casseye, President of the Heart League, which has just launched the "Heart Week 2013" from September 23 to 29. The theme for this year is to eat better and exercise for fun and for the heart, remembering that simple, everyday choices that reduce salt intake have a major impact on our heart's health.

Dominique Michel (COMEOS) and Chris Moris (FEVIA)







FEVIA

FEVIA est une organisation par et pour l'industrie alimentaire. FEVIA favorise avant tout la combativité économique et commerciale de ses membres en fournissant des avis, en soutenant l'exportation et en promouvant l'innovation. FEVIA souhaite accompagner ses membres dans le développement de produits qui assurent à l'utilisateur final une offre variée et des denrées alimentaires de qualité. En 2012, le chiffre d'affaires de l'industrie alimentaire était de 46,589 milliards d'euros.

Conférence de presse réduction en sel 23/09/13

1





Comeos

Comeos est le porte-parole du commerce et des services en Belgique. Nos membres sont actifs au sein de dix-huit secteurs et vendent leurs produits et services aux entreprises ou directement aux consommateurs. Ensemble, nos secteurs représentent 11,2 pourcent du PIB et occupent quelque 400 000 personnes, ce qui fait du commerce le plus grand employeur du secteur privé. Comeos fournit des services sur mesure à ses membres et souhaite, en tant que plateforme de réseautage, soutenir la dynamique du commerce.

Conférence de presse réduction en sel 23/09/13

2









 En 2009, FEVIA et Comeos ont conclu un engagement avec les autorités belges afin réduire la consommation en sel au sein de la population belge



Monitoring teneur en sel d'aliments produits en 2004 et 2012 →
 REDUCTION avec des pointes de plus de 20%



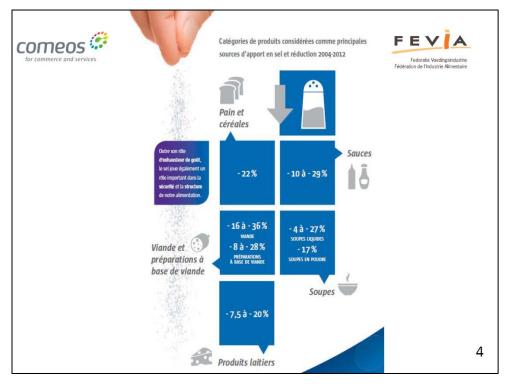
• Réduire le sel dans les produits n'était <u>pas une évidence</u> \rightarrow rôle important pour le goût mais également nécessaire pour la sécurité et la texture de notre alimentation

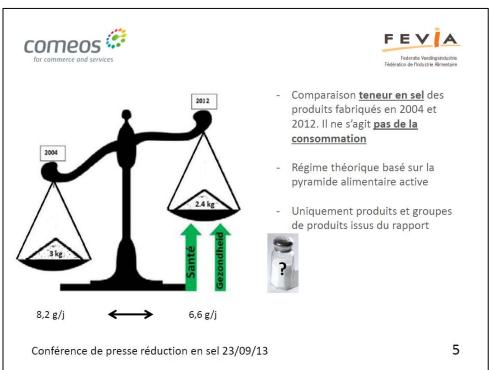


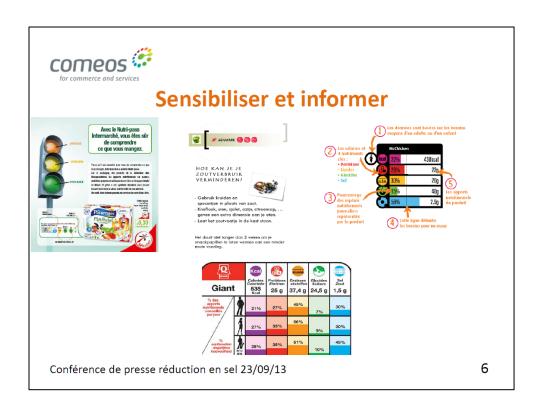
<u>Succès</u> grâce aux efforts des entreprises et différents projets de recherche effectués entre 2004 - 2012

Conférence de presse réduction en sel 23/09/13

3











Sensibiliser et informer

 Promotion de l'utilisation des GDA sur l'emballage (Guideline Daily Amounts) parmi leurs membres





• Nouveau règlement FIC (à partir de fin 2014) → obligation de mentionner le sel et non plus le sodium

Conférence de presse réduction en sel 23/09/13

7



Sensibiliser et informer

 Soutien de Nubel (Nutriments Belgique), base de données en ligne avec informations nutritionnelles par produit → info en ligne sur la teneur en sel dans les produits





www.internubel.be

Conférence de presse réduction en sel 23/09/13

8





Prochaines étapes

- Nécessité de poursuivre la sensibilisation quant à la consommation en sel
 - Focus sur le sel ajouté dans les familles
- Quid des repas pris à l'extérieur ? Efforts de la part de l'horeca 'non-organisé' ?
- Denrées alimentaires importées ?

Conférence de presse réduction en sel 23/09/13

9



Dr Freddy Van de Casseye (Belgian Heart League)

SEL ET MALADIES CARDIO-CÉRÉBROVASCULAIRES

Dr Freddy Van de Casseye Président-General Manager



- Sel et hypertension / conséquences
- Sel et études de population
- Bénéfices



VOEDINGSZOUT EN HOGE BLOEDDRUK

- Volkeren met laag zoutgebruik hebben geen hoge bloeddruk
- Zowel bij mensen als bij dieren die meer zout krijgen stijgt de bloeddruk
- De "normale" leeftijdsgebonden toename van de bloeddruk is meest uitgesproken bij volkeren die veel zout gebruiken
- In de bloedvaten van mensen met hoge bloeddruk is de zoutconcentratie hoger
- Bij hoge bloeddrukpatienten daalt de bloeddruk als men het zout beperkt
- De bloeddrukdaling bij zoutbeperking is meer uitgesproken naarmate de zoutbeperking strenger wordt



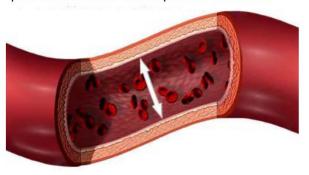
MÉCANISME SEL/HYPERTENSION

- Rétention d'eau : 7 volume circulant
- Augmentation du débit cardiaque :
 ¬
 pression artérielle
- Effet vasculaire :
 - ➤ Perte d'élasticité
 - Facteur d'athérosclérose
 - ➤ Rétrécissement vasculaire



Qu'est-ce que la pression artérielle? Wat is hoge bloeddruk?

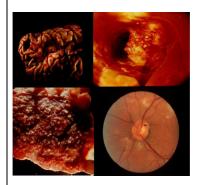
La pression artérielle est la mesure de la pression exercée sur la paroi des artères



Bij hoge bloeddruk meet men de druk van het bloed tegen de wanden van de slagaders



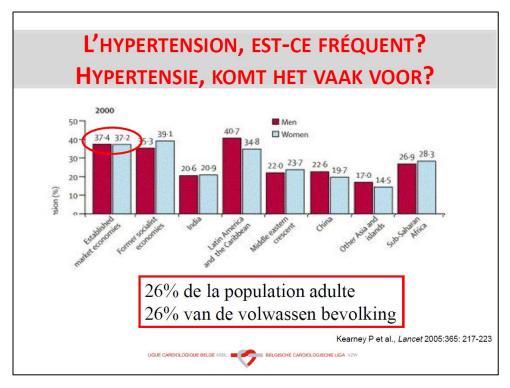
L'HYPERTENSION, UN « TUEUR SILENCIEUX« HYPERTENSIE, EEN « STILLE DODER »

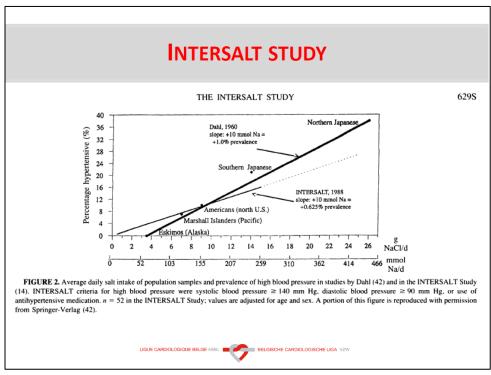


Une cause majeure / Meest voorkomende oorzaken:

- d'accident vasculaire cérébral / Cerebrovasculair accident
- d'infarctus du myocarde / Hartinfarct
- d'insuffisance cardiaque / Hartfalen
- · d'insuffisance rénale / Nierfalen
- de thrombose oculaire / Oculaire trombose



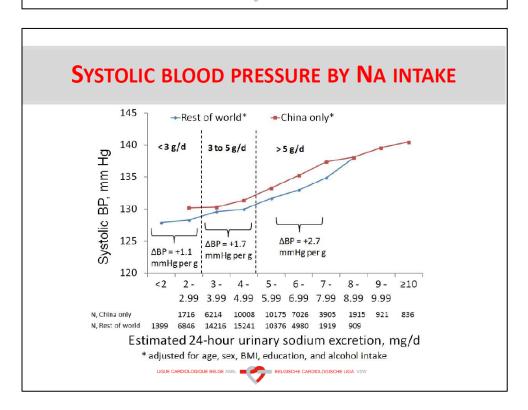


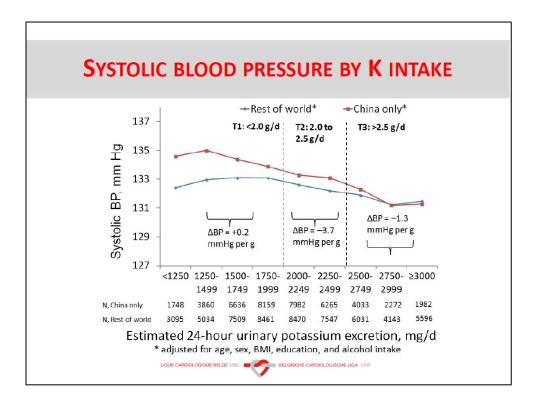


PURE TRIAL

- 99 114 participants, aged 35-70 y, enrolled from 628 communities in 17 countries, using an unbiased approach
- Standardized BP measurements using automated device
- Regression analyses
 - ➤ Association of Na and K intakes with BP levels; overall & key subgroups
 - Adjusted for age, sex, education, BMI, and alcohol
 - Observed intake was corrected for RDB to obtain 'usual intake'



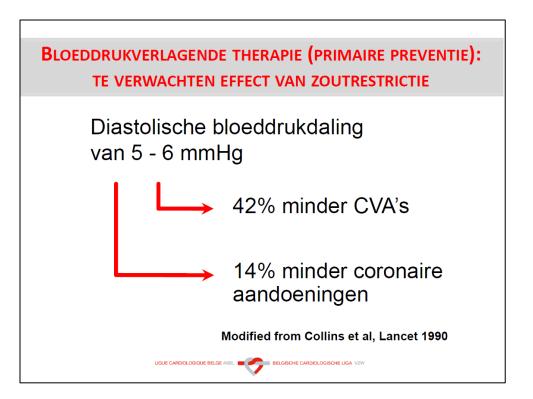


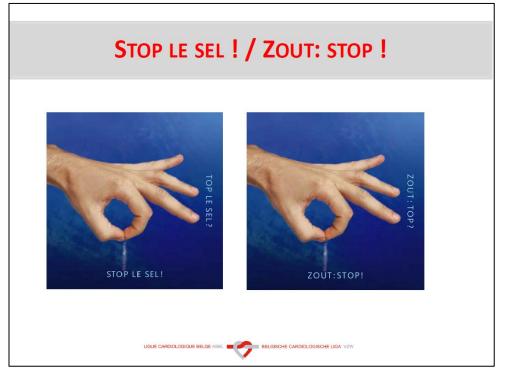


SUMMARY

- Each 1 g (43.5 mmol) increase in Na intake is associated with a 2.2 mmHg increase in systolic BP and 0.8 mmHg increase in diastolic BP
- Na intake is more strongly related to BP in those with high Na intake, hypertension, and older individuals







Dutch







FEVIA

FEVIA is een organisatie door en voor de voedingsindustrie. FEVIA bevordert in de eerste plaats de economische en commerciële slagkracht van haar leden door het verstrekken van advies, de ondersteuning van de export en het bevorderen van innovatie. FEVIA wenst haar leden te begeleiden bij de ontwikkeling van voeding die de eindverbruiker verzekert van een kwalitatief en gevarieerd aanbod aan levensmiddelen. De voedingsindustrie was in 2012 goed voor een omzetcijfer van € 46,589 miljard.

Persconferentie zoutreductie 23/09/13

1





Comeos

Comeos vertegenwoordigt de Belgische handel en diensten. Onze leden zijn actief in achttien sectoren en verkopen aan bedrijven of rechtstreeks aan de consument. Samen zijn onze sectoren goed voor 11,2 procent van het bnp en stellen ze 400.000 mensen te werk, wat van de handel de grootste werkgever in de privé-sector maakt. Comeos levert diensten op maat van zijn leden, en wil als kennis- en netwerkingplatform de dynamiek van de handel stimuleren.

Persconferentie zoutreductie 23/09/13

2









 FEVIA en Comeos hebben samen met de Belgische overheid een engagement aangegaan in 2009 om te streven naar een reductie in zoutinname bij de Belgische bevolking



 Monitoring <u>zoutgehalte</u> van producten geproduceerd in 2004 en 2012 → REDUCTIE met uitschieters tot meer dan 20%



Zoutreductie in producten was geen evidentie

rol als smaakbrenger maar staat ook in voor de veiligheid en de structuur van ons voedsel

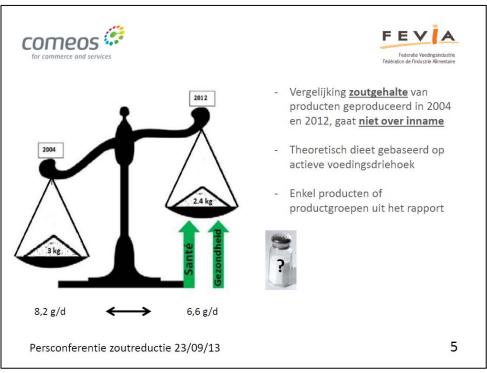


• <u>Gelukt</u> dankzij inspanningen van de bedrijven en verschillende onderzoeksprojecten uitgevoerd tussen 2004 - 2012

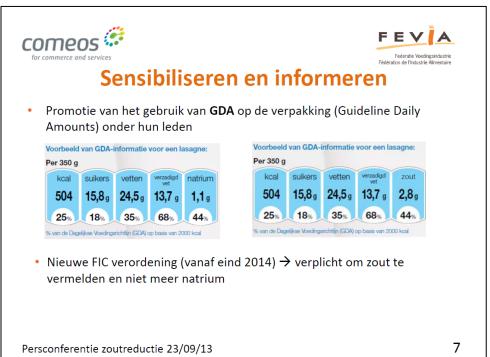
Persconferentie zoutreductie 23/09/13

3











Sensibiliseren en informeren

 Ondersteuning van Nubel (Nutriënten België), online databank met nutritionele gegevens per product → online info over het zoutgehalte in producten





www.internubel.be

Persconferentie zoutreductie 23/09/13

8





Next steps

- · Verdere sensibilisering nodig rond zoutinname
 - Focus op toevoegen zout in gezinnen
- Wat met buitenhuis eten? Inspanningen nietgeorganiseerde horeca?
- Ingevoerde producten?

Persconferentie zoutreductie 23/09/13

9



6. Event promotional material

Invitation (NL)

Persconferentie 'Minder zout in de voeding van de Belgen' op 23/09/13 - minister Onkelinx

Minister van volksgezondheid Laurette Onkelinx nodigt u uit op de persconferentie over de succesvolle verlaging van het zoutgehalte in belangrijke voedingsmiddelen op de Belgische markt.

Voedingsmiddelen geproduceerd in België bevatten vandaag een pak minder zout dan enkele jaren geleden. Dit is het resultaat van goede afspraken tussen de voedingsindustrie en de FOD Volksgezondheid, Veiligheid van de Voedselketen en Leefmilieu, in het kader van het Federaal Plan Voeding en Gezondheid.

Natrium, het hoofdbestanddeel van zout, is verantwoordelijk voor hoge bloeddruk en dus voor harten vaatziekten, nog altijd de belangrijkste doodsoorzaak in ons land.

Deze sprekers lichten de problematiek van zout en zoutreductie voor u toe:

- Laurette Onkelinx, Minister van Volksgezondheid
- Dr. Freddy Van de Casseye, Voorzitter-Algemeen directeur Belgische Cardiologische Liga
- Chris Morris, CEO Fevia (Federatie Voedingsindustrie)
- Dominique Michel, Gedelegeerd bestuurder van Comeos (Federatie Handel en Diensten)

Wanneer?

Maandag 23/09/2013 om 14u

Waar?

Residence Palace, zaal Polak

Het Résidence Palace vindt u in de buurt van het Schumanplein. Het adres is: Wetstraat 155 – Blok C 1040 Brussel

http://www.presscenter.org/nl/page/hoe-kunt-u-het-r%C3%A9sidence-palace-vinden

Website links

"Less salt in the food supply of the Belgians" - 23/09/2013 -Minister Onkelinx

http://www.presscenter.org/fr/pressrelease/20130920/moins-de-sel-dans-l-offre-alimentaire-des-belges-23092013-ministre-onkelinx

"Less salt in the food supply of the Belgians" - 23/09/2013 - Minister Onkelinx

Publish time: 20/09/2013 10:50 Rubric: POLITICS Company: Presscenter.org IPTC: politics / government

Source:

FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment

The Minister of Public Health, Laurette Onkelinx, invites you to a press conference about the remarkable decrease in the amount of salt in the main food products on the Belgian market.

The food products in Belgium today contain less salt than a few years ago. This is the result of past commitments, under the Federal Nutrition and Health Plan, between the food industry and the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment.

Sodium, the main component of salt, is a silent killer: it is responsible for hypertension and consequently cardiovascular diseases, the leading causes of death in our country.

The problem of salt and its reduction in food will be presented by:

- Laurette Onkelinx, Minister of Public Health
- Dr Freddy Van de Casseye, President Director General of the Belgian Heart League
- Chris Moris, Director General of Fevia (Federation of Food Industry)
- Dominique Michel, Managing Director of Comeos (Trade and Services Federation)

When?

Monday, 23/09/2013 at 2 pm

Where?

Résidence Palace, Polak Room

The Résidence Palace is located in the Schuman area: rue de la Loi 155, Block C, 1040 Brussels

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7. Coverage

Less salt in Belgian products

BRUSSELS – Salt levels, and therefore sodium, in Belgian food has steadily declined in recent years, as we learned yesterday during a press conference in the presence of Laurette Onkelinx and the representatives of the sectorial federations Fevia and Comeos. Five categories of products (meat, bread and cereals, sauces, powdered soups and dairy products) have been the subject of voluntary efforts by industrial producers and distribution companies following an agreement signed with the FPS Public Health in 2009. The agreement was to effect a 10% reduction in sodium consumption by Belgians, which at an average of 10.45 grams of salt ingested each day far exceeds the 5 grams recommended by the WHO. Products based on meat (from -16 to -36%) and bread and cereals (-22%) saw the greatest reduction in salt.

© 2013 Metro, September 24, 2013, p. 3

Up to 56% less salt in processed foods

And you, how much salt do you eat each day? More than 5 grams? If so, you are exceeding the standard set by the World Health Organization (WHO). Even so, you are still within the Belgian standard, where the average is 10.45 grams. This has adverse effects on health: two million people suffer from hypertension and nearly half are unaware of their condition. In short, in 2009 the FPS Public Health signed an agreement with Comeos (federation of trade and services) and Fevia (which oversees the food industry) to tackle excessive consumption. Goal: a 10% reduction in the salt content of major product categories.

Was it successful? Very much so, according to the results announced yesterday in the presence of Laurette Onkelinx (PS).

According to Comeos, from 2004 to 2012 the average decrease in salt for bread was 26.9% (30% for white, 23.6% for brown, 30.4% for wholegrain and 29.7% for the baguette).

For cheese, the decrease was 19.7% (with a peak of 34.4% for soft cheese, against 18.3% in mild Gouda and 2.5% in mature Gouda).

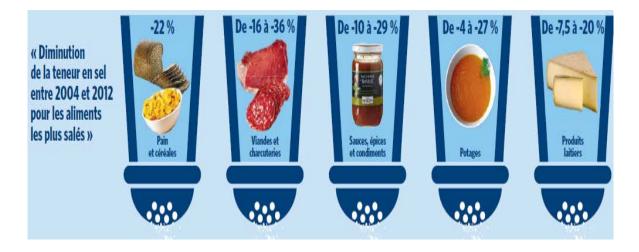
Great efforts were also made for prepared meats where the average decrease was 35.7%. Here, the peak was reached in salami (40.5% less salt), sausages and pies (37%), cured meat (33.1%) and cured ham (31.9%).

For soups, the decrease was 26.6% versus 28.7% for sauces (56.6% in pickles, 27% in ketchup, 20.5% in mustard and 10.6% in mayonnaise). Finally, prepared dishes saw a decrease of 28.9% (33.9% in quiches and pizzas, 21.2% in sandwich salads).

Ch. C.

© 2013 La Capitale, La Meuse, La Nouvelle Gazette, La Province, Le Quotidien de Namur, Nord Eclair, September 24, 2013, p. 14

Belgians still eat too much salt



Should salt content be limited legally in foods by imposing maximum limits, given that the Belgians eat twice the daily amount of salt recommended by health authorities, such as the WHO? Since 2009, the Health Minister Laurette Onkelinx (PS) has preferred to focus on negotiating with the manufacturing and distribution industry in order to reduce the salt content of food consumed by Belgians.

The results are now known: at the top of the top five major contributors is bread and cereals, e.g. decreased by 22%. Since 2004, meat has decreased from 16 to 36% and sauces from 10 to 29%. Obviously, the more salt a food contains, the greater the reduction can be... even if the product still contains a lot.

Nevertheless, this is a significant reduction. "Salt reduction affects the entire food chain. The industry experts have joined forces with those of the FPS Public Health to reformulate each food category on a voluntary basis. Each sector has modified its products within the acceptable technological and sensory limits (taste, texture)", explains the minister.

For her, the operation was a success: "The salt content since 2004 has steadily declined in a large number of commodities. This is good for health. This effort obviously has to be combined with public information campaigns, including encouraging people to choose less salty food and reduce the use of salt to obtain a minimum 10% reduction in salt intake. This is because the latest figures show that the average Belgian consumes 10.45 g of salt, while recommendations suggest 5 g maximum. A new study at the end of the year will check salt intake levels by testing urine samples. We can then check whether this decline has actually had the desired effect."

The central problem is in fact that most of the salt we eat is hidden. Between 70 and 80% comes from foods such as bread, meat and ready meals, soups and cheeses. There is even salt in pastries and foods that do not have a salty taste, like breakfast cereals, and in some foods that may even be advertised officially as a "healthy" option.

Many of these foods are not labelled: the consumer cannot easily verify that it does not exceed 5 grams. Even when labelling is present, there are many pitfalls: for instance, many manufacturers label the composition in the form of grams of sodium, the main component of salt. However, there is 1 g of sodium in 2.5 g of salt. Therefore to calculate your "daily intake", you have to multiply the sodium content by nearly three.

Why is this important? Because even though salt helps to keep the body hydrated and helps the transmission of nerve impulses, consumption in excess leads to hypertension and high blood pressure. Two million Belgians are affected and half are unaware because they do not have any clear symptoms of this disease. However, this is a major cause of cardiovascular disease, such as stroke or heart attack, now the leading cause of death in our country.

The effort by producers and distributors is undoubtedly important. It is, in any case, a first step in the right direction, given how easy it would be to use more salt as a flavor enhancer or a preservative, or to increase the weight of a portion with a low price ingredient. If health authorities have chosen to engage with the industry rather than resort to the law, it is mainly because Belgium is at the crossroads of a European food market that would render any unilateral regulation problematic. Will it be enough? Either way, consumers must be willing to retrain their taste buds to a less salty taste. And leave the salt shaker in the cupboard.

Advice - "In the light of hidden salt, the consumer must make informed decisions and forget the salt shaker"

"Such a reduction is definitely a step in the right direction, but it will not be the only factor that ensures that Belgians decrease their salt intake. Only a urine test can prove that eating habits have changed", says Professor Véronique Maindiaux, nutrition and dietetics specialist at the Institut Paul Lambin (Haute Ecole Léonard De Vinci) in Brussels. "Obviously, suddenly reducing consumption by half was not feasible because the taste would be different and even unpleasant. But our taste buds are perfectly capable of adapting, after a few weeks, to a gradual reduction in salt levels. However, if producers make products less salty, and then the consumer compensates by adding salt, we will have lost the fight."

Nevertheless, the dietician reminds us not to "demonize" salt. "It is a flavor enhancer, reduces the number of microbes and is a preservative. It contributes to the texture. However, the evolution of food products has led to overuse. Once included in food, it is impossible to remove."

"This trend is very positive, but it is useless if the consumer turns to another product looking for a salty taste", reacted Nicolas Guggenbühl, nutritionist and dietician, professor at the

Institut Paul Lambin. "There has, for instance, been a craze for some breads like focaccia or ciabatta, which are much more salty. But beware: even if it is our primary source of salt, we must not eliminate bread, which is an essential part of our diet and not consumed enough today. The same phenomenon can be seen for dried tomatoes or peppers. These are food varieties invented at a time when salt was essential to preserve food, but they have a high salt content. If you reduce consumption of cured meat, but make other food choices that seem to offer health benefits, such as vegetables, but choose very salty varieties, it is just a risk migration. In addition, a reduction of 25% of salt in an extremely salty product does not necessarily correspond to levels consistent with a consumption of 5 grams per day. It is better to opt for natural, less salty products."

For Professor Guggenbühl, the problem is due to an increasingly manufactured and produced food supply. "It is becoming increasingly complex. It is therefore necessary to educate, not deceive the consumer in his choices. For instance, 40% of Americans believe that sea salt is less harmful than salt. This is a myth; it is exactly the same commodity. Similarly, there is currently a trend towards *fleur de sel* (hand-harvested sea salt) or old salted butter, but this is just a new source of salt intake."

For industry, the problem is not simple. Reducing salt intake is not without its risks. "Faced with reduced salt ham, the consumer might turn to another product that he will find more enjoyable, without even realizing it. In terms of marketing, removing an ingredient is still a difficult concept to introduce. The consumer must start to realise that this action is for the benefit of his health and he should not switch to products that hide their salt content. Legislation requiring the salt content in packaged foods to be displayed only comes into force at the end of 2014. So, for the consumer, it is still very difficult to make choices."



FRÉDÉRIC SOUMOIS

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Less salt in Belgian meals

The Belgian food industry has reduced the amount of salt in its products by 8-36%

What better way to start the Week of the Heart than with good news? The amount of salt in the Belgian diet has decreased by 8-36% depending on the food categories. That is a real health benefit, even though there is still a long way to go.

The challenge began in 2009. At that time, the FPS Public Health established a partnership agreement with the federation of the food industry (Fevia), Afsca and the federation of commerce and services (Comeos). Goal: "To reduce salt intake by consumers by 10% between 2004 and 2012."

The Health Minister, Laurette Onkelinx, and representatives of the sectors were therefore very proud to be able to show what progress had been made... albeit gradual.

Changing the composition of a food product - salt in this case - is not easy. In addition to its nutritional purpose, salt is also important in terms of taste and the preservation of products, among other things. Therefore, to avoid any nasty surprises, the different food sectors altered their salt content very gradually.

This was successful in varying degrees depending on the food categories, but the 10% threshold was achieved, in some cases by a wide margin. Bread for example, "is consumed less and less", says the head of the Fevia, "but is still a popular food" and has seen its salt content reduced by 22%. The bakery industry now uses more iodized salt, an additional benefit for health.

That said, the success of this long-term challenge has its limits. Obviously, it only concerns Belgian production and organized catering (large chains). However, 30% of meals are eaten outside the home and no authority in the country can force foreign producers to limit the amount of salt in products that we import.

Nonetheless, this success has been the breeding ground for further changes. Comeos and Fevia are already working on fats, additives and sugars. Ultimately, the same efforts will have to be made regarding the calorie content of food.

J.-B. M.

Two million Belgians threatened by the other silent killer

A recent study of nearly 100,000 participants shows the correlation between salt intake and hypertension

Eating salty food is a guilty pleasure that may cost us dear. Indeed, by salting our food, we engage in a very bad habit because overconsumption of salt causes hypertension.

The explanation is simple. Sodium chloride (NaCl) or table salt causes water retention and thus, an increase in the volume circulating in our blood vessels. From this follows an increase in cardiac output. The result is elevated blood pressure.

This hypertension is harmful to our body. It is a major cause of stroke, myocardial infarction, heart and kidney failure and even ocular thrombosis.

The World Health Organization recommends consumption of only 5 grams of salt per day; in Belgium we consume twice that on average (between 9 and 12 grams).

Paracelsus, the father of modern medicine said, "The dose makes the poison."

Salt is no exception to the rule. Thus, this much-loved public condiment can become a silent killer if you do not monitor its consumption.

Several recent studies report that a decrease of a few grams per day could significantly reduce the number of cardiovascular events. Some scientists even argue that many millions of deaths from cardiovascular disease could be prevented if the maximum dose of 5 grams per day was respected.

Julien Crepin (St.)

Still half way to go

The decreased intake of salt - and therefore sodium - in Belgian food is a step towards good health. However, it is not always easy, as the representatives of Fevia and Comeos recalled yesterday. Particularly because it starts with sensible use and the figures shown for reduction do not represent any decrease in actual salt consumption by Belgians, which, let's not forget, is on average twice the recommended level.

In addition to its nutritional and functional role in food, salt is a flavor enhancer. The fear was that by reducing salt content too abruptly, the consumer would resort to the salt shaker more often. Along with this, it is difficult to quantify the overall salt intake. Studies were conducted a few years ago - hence the need to change habits - and another is planned in early 2014 to verify the impact of changes in product compositions.

More consumers are being encouraged to pay attention to labels and the salt levels in foods. Work on label simplification is still under way (e.g. sodium content will be replaced by salt content). Finally, the prevention campaign "Stop the salt!" will be launched again, just to remind us that less salt in the food supply is good, but consuming less salt is better.

J.-B. M.

Less salt in some Belgian products

- The salt content in certain categories of Belgian food has steadily decreased in recent years.
- Result of a salt reduction convention signed by the industrial and distribution sectors as well as the FPS Public Health in 2009.

Top 5 des catégories de produits responsables de la prise de sel

		Diminution entre 2004 et 2012 ¹
	Pain et céréales	22% (divers types de pain)
40	Viandes et charcuteries	16 - 36% (charcuteries)
		8 - 28% (préparations de viande)
Sauces, épices et condiments		10 - 29% (sauces)
	Potages	4 - 27% (potages liquides)
		17% (potages en poudre)
	Produits laitiers	7,5 = 20% (fromages)

¹ Etant donné que les chiffres peuvent varier en fonction de la corbeille de produits considérée lors du calcul, certains chiffres fluctuent endéans une certaine marge. Comme il est difficile d'attribuer la part de marché des différents produits par marque, il est impossible de calculer un chiffre précis.

Les catégories qui contribuent à la majeure partie de l'ingestion de sel ont été identifiées sur base des données du Sondage de Consommation Alimentaire (2004). Selon l'Institut de Santé Publique, les contributions sont réparties comme suit :

Catégorie alimentaire	% contribution	Catégorie alimentaire	% contribution
Céréales et produits céréaliers	28.02	Pommes de terres et tubercules	1.19
Viande et produits de viande	18.85	Boissons alcoolisées	0.76
Sauces/épices/herbes	14.05	Graisses	0.73
Soupes	11.74	Sucre et confiseries	0.68 ਤੋਂ
Produits laitiers	9.91	Fruits	0.64
Cake, biscuit, pudding	3.40	Oeufs et ovoproduits	0.41
Poissons et crustacés	2.46	Légumineux	0.16
Boissons non-alcoolisées	2.29	Divers	0.73 0.68 0.64 0.41 0.16 1.56
Légumes	1.95		La Libre Belgique

10.5 g - Belgians like salt

According to the latest available data (2009), Belgian consumes an average of 10.5 g of salt (NaCl) per day, of which about 25% is added salt and 75% is from prepared products, while the World Health Organization recommends a maximum daily consumption of 5 to 6 g of salt.

1 q = 2.5 q - sodium and salt

The salt we consume in food is actually sodium chloride or NaCl. The problematic element in this formula is sodium. It is vital for many functions in the body, but present in large quantities in our diet it can cause hypertension.

On track

Knowing that Belgians consume twice the recommended nutritional levels of salt, the challenge was ambitious: to reduce consumer salt intake by 10% between 2009 and 2012. Yet, this task was confided to Comeos (federation of trade and services), Fevia (federation of the food industry) and the FPS Public Health with the signing, in 2009, of the salt reduction convention. At a round-table meeting on Monday in Brussels, to which the Belgian Heart League was also invited, the three signatories proudly announced that they had achieved, at least in part, their commitments under the Federal Nutrition and Health Plan.

What do we know? A number of foods produced in Belgium, such as bread, cereals, meat products, cheese and powdered soups (see graphics) now have a lower salt content than a few years ago.

To achieve this goal, the consumer was informed and educated, but the composition of the product was also adjusted gradually and progressively and within the technological and sensory limits, so that the consumer did not abandon these products. "Changing the composition of food products is not easy", stated Dominique Michel, Managing Director of Comeos. "Salt is not just a flavor, it is also used as a preservative. Adjustments had to be effected gradually, so that the consumer was not faced with a sudden change in taste of the product."

Among the categories for which industries were invited to make an effort, meat (-16 to-36% between 2004 and 2012), and bread and cereals (-22%) contained the least salt.

Even if the results on salt content in the participating foods (own brands of chains, but also some fast-food chains and other Belgian producers) are now known, it does not represent the average consumption of Belgians, which will be studied at the end of this year. This, via a urine test, should be proposed by the end of the year to a representative sample (at least 150) of the Belgian population. This study will quantify the average salt intake per capita compared to previous results obtained in 2009.

Part of the solution

Reducing the salt content of certain foods produced in Belgium, however, is only part of the solution. Indeed, imported products need to follow the trend, which seems to be the case in some countries at least.

Indeed, the consumer should not annihilate industry's efforts by not adapting his behavior, i.e. pouring salt generously on lasagna, now prepared less salty.

Moreover, even though we can more or less manage food at home and adopt the recommended good habits (see box, for example), do not forget that about 30% of meals are eaten outside the home.

3 Questions for Dr Freddy van Casseye, President of the Belgian Heart League

What is the link between salt and cardio-cerebrovascular diseases?

The mechanism is simple: it is water-soluble retention. When the consumption of salt increases, it increases water retention, the circulating blood volume and flow and cardiac work, and therefore blood pressure. A long-term increase in blood pressure results in a loss of elasticity of the arteries and will be a factor for atherosclerosis, which ultimately will lead to narrowing of the arteries resulting in stroke or myocardial infarction.

To what extent does salt intake have on adverse health?

One study (Pure sodium study) conducted among 100,000 people in the world, which has been presented in Amsterdam as part of the European Society of Cardiology, confirmed a clear correlation between daily salt intake and increased blood pressure. It has been shown that a daily intake of 1 g sodium or 2.5 g of salt increases blood pressure by 1.1. Between 3 and 5 g, it will increase by 1.7. Beyond 5 g of salt, the increase is 2.7. On the basis of this recent study, so it is estimated that an average increase of 2.2 mm of mercury (Hg) of systolic pressure and 0.8 mm of diastolic pressure is the result of an intake of 1 g of sodium, 2.5 g of salt. Decreasing the diastolic pressure by 5-6 mmHg, we believe we can reduce stroke by 42% and infarction by 14%.

How can you tell if you eat too much salt?

To assess salt intake, take a urine test. It is also expected that a representative sample of the Belgian population is tested by the end of the year.

Some tips - Shake the salt? Stop the salt!

By shopping carefully, read the product labels to inform you of the amount of salt they contain. Warning: 1 g of sodium equal 2.5 g of salt.

Eat fruits, vegetables and potatoes, which contain little sodium, but are full of fiber and vitamins, among others.

Season your dishes with herbs (parsley, basil, mint) or spices (pepper, paprika, cumin).

Eat a low-salt breakfast.

Look for less salty products. In three weeks, you will become used to a less salty taste.

Limit fast food, sandwiches, snacks and chips.

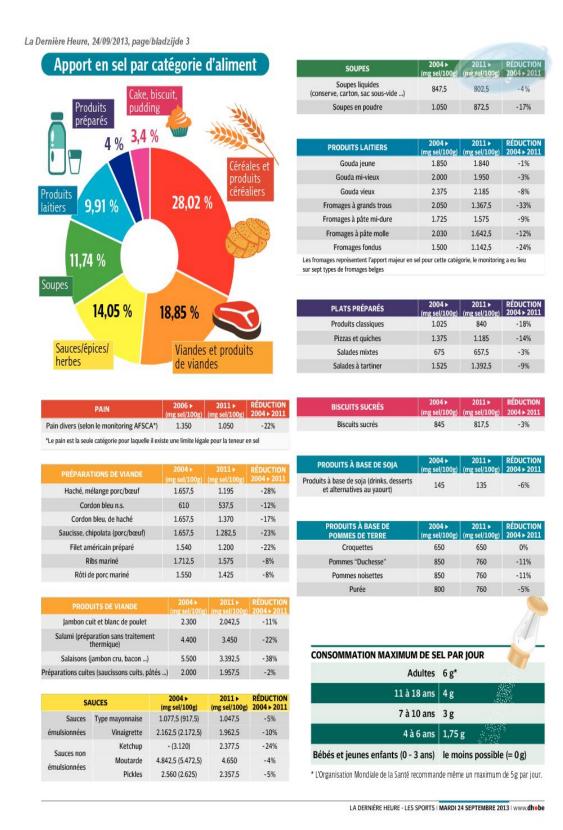
Avoid placing the salt shaker on the table so that you will not be tempted to always add more salt to dishes sometimes even before you taste them. And even when you are cooking,

why not try to forget the "salt" reflex? By tasting preparations, we can learn that it may not always be necessary to add salt.

More information: www.stoplesel.be

L.D.

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