



Reducing salt consumption in China – May 2019



The George Institute
for Global Health

Facts:

- Average salt consumption in China is 12.5g/day, twice WHO recommendations.
- In 2017, excess salt intake was estimated to cause 1.6 million deaths in China.
- A moderate reduction in dietary salt consumption has the potential to avert hundreds of thousands of strokes and heart attacks in China each year.

Project cycle:

2019 – 2024

Partners:

*The George Institute, Australia
UNSW Sydney, Australia
The George Institute, China
Peking University Health Science Center
University of Sydney, Australia
Resolve To Save Lives
Johns Hopkins University
Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention
World Health Organization*

Supporters:

*National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), Australia
Global Alliance for Chronic Disease*

Background:

- Excess salt in the diet is associated with high blood pressure and increased risks of stroke, heart attack and kidney disease. This leads to serious health problems or premature death in hundreds of thousands of people in China every year.
- The problems with excess salt intake are particularly marked in China because food tends to be very salty. On average, Chinese people eat two and half times more salt each day than is recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Reducing salt intake has been clearly proven to lower blood pressure. Salt reduction is a focus for the Resolve To Save Lives (RTSL) initiative, which is commencing its salt reduction work in China.

Aims:

- The overall goal of this five-year project is to support the implementation of the RTSL salt reduction program in China. Our work will help identify what works, what doesn't and how to maximise impact on health with the resources available.
- Specifically, we will work with RTSL, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and WHO to measure the extent to which the salt reduction program is implemented as planned. To achieve this, we will evaluate government actions, food industry engagement, community impact and whether the program changes the amount of salt eaten by the general population.

Methods:

- We will conduct a series of large-scale surveys and interviews across all sectors involved at baseline (year one), year three and year five. Working with RTSL and the Chinese Government, we will provide specific recommendations about how to enhance the intervention.
- The surveys will include measures of population salt consumption and blood pressure levels, which we will use to model the impact of the program on strokes, heart attacks and kidney disease. We will also measure the cost-effectiveness of the intervention.

Impact:

- Reductions in salt intake will be attempted through community education and by working with the food industry to reduce the amount of salt in foods.
- The program is expected to lead to reduced dietary salt consumption, lower blood pressure and reduced cardiovascular disease.
- The study will test the effectiveness of the salt reduction program in six Chinese provinces and gather the data required to design and scale an intervention across China.

Contact:

To find out more about this study, its principal investigators Dr Maoyi Tian or The George Institute for Global Health, please contact Julia Timms
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