

DROP THE SALT!

**AWASH Key Findings Document IV
Salt levels in Australian Pizzas**

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on Salt and Health



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BACKGROUND

Australians are currently consuming around nine grams of salt each day. Government advice is that people should eat no more than 4 grams of salt a day with an upper maximum limit of 6 grams. Excess salt consumed throughout life is bad for health, causing blood pressure to rise with age, which increases the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The good news is that reducing salt intakes can reverse these risks. The Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) Drop the Salt! Campaign was launched in May 2007. It aims to improve the health of the Australian population through a gradual reduction in dietary salt that will reduce cardiovascular diseases and other salt-related health problems. AWASH will achieve this mission by promoting the benefits of salt reduction throughout all sectors of the Australian community, including industry, consumers, scientists, healthcare workers, government, regulatory bodies and professional organisations.

Most of the salt consumed by Australians is not salt added during cooking or at the table but salt already hidden in processed foods. A key objective of the AWASH strategy is therefore to work with the food ingredients, manufacturing, retail, and food service industries to reduce the sodium content of packaged foods by an average 25% of the next five years. AWASH is currently collaborating closely with food retail and manufacturing bodies to implement a strategy to achieve this objective.

However, an increasing proportion of food is now eaten outside the home and therefore AWASH is keen to engage with the food service and catering industries more effectively. The fast food industry represents an area within food service that can contribute substantially to the levels of salt consumed in meals outside the home.

In April 2009, AWASH collected information on the sodium content of take-away pizzas from three leading chains in Australia direct from their websites, as well as the sodium content of pizzas available for purchase in two of Australia's leading supermarket chains. This report highlights the key findings from this research.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

The primary objective of this project was to report on the sodium content of pizzas provided by leading chains in Australia and assess what contribution they made to dietary guidelines.

The sodium values (per 100g and per serve) and serving sizes of fast food products were collected from the company websites in April 2009 for the following companies:

- Pizza Hut
- Dominoes
- Eagle Boys

The sodium values (per serve and per 100g) and serving sizes of supermarket-bought pizzas were collected for the following brands direct from the product NIP in-store.

- McCain
- Papa Giuseppe's
- Woolworths Home Brand and Deli Express
- Coles Smart Buy



- Weight Watchers

There were 115 take-away pizzas and 41 supermarket-bought pizzas included in the analysis. For every individual pizza, the portion size, sodium in mg/portion and salt in g/portion was determined. Values per pizza were also recorded. Pizza size for take-away pizzas was estimated at 8 slices per pizza, and for supermarket-bought was estimated as the total size of the packaged product.

The percentage contribution of each product to the 1600mg Suggested Dietary Target (SDT) as indicated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) was then calculated, and the products with the highest and lowest sodium for both take-away and supermarket-bought pizza categories were determined (per 100g, per slice and per pizza).

Some of the results in this document are reported in salt as well as sodium. To convert grams of sodium to grams of salt, multiply by 2.5.

The information in this report is based on the information available on the company websites and product NIPs and does not take into account the fact that some companies may have made changes to product formulations that are not yet reflected on the website and/or product NIP. Some companies whose products were included in analysis have indicated their commitment to reducing sodium levels in their products.

MAIN FINDINGS

- Meatlovers pizzas scored worst overall in both take-away and packaged categories.
- Generally, vegetable- and seafood-based pizzas were lower in sodium (per 100g) than meat-based pizzas, with a few exceptions.
- No one pizza chain was better or worse than others.
- Take-away pizzas were generally higher in sodium than store-bought pizzas; the top 10 pizzas per 100g, per slice and per pizza were all store-bought with one exception for Pizza Hut's Deep Pan Veggie Supreme.
- The pizza with the highest sodium per 100g (overall and in the take-away category) was Pizza Hut's Thin 'n Crispy BBQ Meat Lovers (890mg/100g) providing 276% of the 4g SDT in one pizza; 35% in just one slice (**Table 1**).
- The pizza with the lowest sodium per 100g was McCain Pizza Singles Ham & Pineapple (250mg/100g) providing 63% of the 4g SDT in one pizza or 16% in one slice (**Table 2**).
- Take-away pizzas provided between 5.6 - 13.1g of salt per pizza (0.7 - 1.6g per slice); or 139 - 327% of the 4g SDT (**Table 1**).
- Store-bought pizzas provided between 2.5 - 8.6g of salt per pizza (0.2 - 2.4g per slice); or 63 - 216% of the 4g SDT (**Table 2**).
- Four pizzas provided more than three times the 4g SDT; Pizza Hut's Stuffed Crust Supreme and BBQ Meat Lovers, and Eagle Boys Carnivore (both Mild Base and Thin Crust).
- 94% of all pizzas provided more than 100% of the 4g SDT.
- 75% of store-bought pizzas provided more than 4g of salt.
- 100% of take-away pizzas provided more than 4g of salt.

Table 1 and Table 2 below outline the sodium values per 100g, per slice and per pizza for takeaway and supermarket-bought pizzas respectively. Table 3 shows the products containing the highest and lowest sodium levels per 100g, per slice and per pizza.



Table 1: Take-away pizzas

	Pizza Hut	Dominoes	Eagle Boys	Average
No products	28	30	57	
Sodium (mg/100g)	600 (317-890)	606 (451-842)	579 (381-855)	591 (317-890)
Sodium (mg/slice)	467 (279-654)	423 (301-598)	428 (297-604)	436 (279-654)
% 1600 mg target (per slice)	17-41%	19-37%	19-38%	27%
Sodium (mg/pizza)	3693 (2232-5234)	3380 (2426-4766)	3424 (2377-4835)	3478 (2232-5234)
% 1600mg target (per pizza)	139-327%	152-298%	149-302%	217%

Table 2: Supermarket-bought pizzas

	McCain	Papa Giuseppe's	Coles Smart Buy	Woolworths	Weight Watchers
No products	23	7	2	7	1
Sodium (mg/100g)	420 (250-700)	374 (305-435)	413 (410-415)	512 (340-600)	555
Sodium (mg/slice)	454 (81-945)	451 (255-565)	258 (255-260)	353 (212-432)	N/A*
% 1600 mg target (per slice)	5-59%	16-35%	16%	13-27%	N/A*
Sodium (mg/pizza)	1711 (1000-2658)	1947 (1556-2262)	2063 (2050-2075)	2828 (1700-3450)	1277
% 1600mg target (per pizza)	63-166%	97-141%	128-130%	106-216%	80%

* Weight Watchers pizza product contains only one serving size per package

Table 3: Products with highest and lowest sodium levels

	Highest sodium	Lowest sodium
Take-away/slice	Pizza Hut Stuffed Crust BBQ Meat Lovers	Pizza Hut Deep Pan Veggie Supreme
Take-away/pizza	Pizza Hut Thin 'n Crispy BBQ Meat Lovers	
Take-away/100g		
Supermarket/slice	McCain Pizza Subs Meatlovers	McCain Pizza Perfection Bites
Supermarket/pizza	Woolworths Deli Express Meat Feast	McCain Pizza Singles Ham & Pineapple
Supermarket/100g	McCain Pizza Subs Meatlovers	