



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND MENTAL HYGIENE**  
Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH  
*Commissioner*



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Tuesday, June 24, 2014**  
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## **HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION BRING TOGETHER 34 OF THE WORLD'S LEADING SCIENTISTS TO AFFIRM THAT SODIUM REDUCTION IS KEY TO REDUCING CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE**

**June 24, 2014** – The Health Department and the American Heart Association have brought together 34 of the world's leading scientists to affirm the benefits of reducing population sodium intake to reduce heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in New York City and the United States.

“There is consensus among leading scientists around the world that there is a well-established link between sodium intake and blood pressure, and high blood pressure is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke,” said Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett. “In order to address the number one cause of death, we must continue to work to reduce the sodium content in our food supply.”

“It's challenging for Americans to stick to sodium intake recommendations because most of the sodium we eat in this country is added to our food before we buy it,” said Elliott Antman, M.D., president-elect of the American Heart Association. “Decades of education and awareness about sodium reduction have not adequately moved the needle. In order to really make a difference in the health of all Americans, we must reduce sodium in the food supply through the support of food manufacturers, food processors and the restaurant industry.”

The recommended daily limit of sodium intake according to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans is 2,300 mg per day, however the vast majority of Americans consume an average of 3,400 mg per day, about 50% more than that. Nearly 80% of this sodium consumption comes not from the salt shaker but from packaged and restaurant food. It is estimated that each year 92,000 deaths could be averted and up to \$24 billion health care costs saved by reducing sodium intake nationally.

### **Consensus Statement on Sodium**

Cardiovascular diseases, including heart disease and stroke, are leading causes of death in the United States. Influencing the major risk factors for cardiovascular disease provides an opportunity to improve Americans' health, which in turn can prevent illness and disability, reduce health disparities, save lives and reduce healthcare costs. Considering the full scope of research, the undersigned affirm the scientific basis for lowering current sodium consumption levels in the U.S. population.

Public health recommendations are made after weighing all of the evidence, including studies of greater and lesser strength of design and some with conflicting results. A vast body of research, including observational studies, feeding studies, and randomized controlled trials, indicates that lowering sodium intake lowers blood pressure, a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease. After reviewing evidence on sodium intake and cardiovascular disease outcomes, the Institute of Medicine recently concluded that reducing population sodium intake would have a positive effect on public health. This is consistent with

the compelling body of evidence from laboratory, clinical, and population research that together establishes that high sodium intake causes increases in blood pressure.

We conclude that the evidence is clear. Population-wide reduction of sodium intake is an integral approach to reducing cardiovascular disease events and mortality in the United States.

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We welcome additional scientists who publish in this field and agree with this statement to contact the NYC Health Department to become a signatory: [salt@health.nyc.gov](mailto:salt@health.nyc.gov)

For more information on the impact of high sodium on health, ways of reducing sodium in your diet, and national initiatives on sodium reduction visit [www.nyc.gov/health/salt](http://www.nyc.gov/health/salt)

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**#017-14**

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