

# Salt Reduction Approach

Resolve to Save Lives' (RTSL) approach to salt reduction is based on the World Health Organization's [SHAKE Technical Package](#).

**S**urveillance: Measure and Monitor Salt Use

**H**arness Industry: Promote reformulation of foods and meals to contain less salt

**A**dopt Standards for Labeling and Marketing

**K**nowledge: Educate and communicate to empower individuals to eat less salt

**E**nvironment: Support settings to promote healthy eating

## SURVEILLANCE

Surveillance is a critical component of salt reduction and includes:

**Identification of major sources of salt.** Effective salt reduction strategies are based around the major sources of salt in the diet. Major sources of salt include: (1) salt added in the home during food preparation; (2) prepared foods bought outside the home (restaurants, street food, etc.); and (3) packaged foods. Identifying the leading sources of salt through dietary surveys is a key first step.

**Monitor and evaluate impact of salt reduction strategies.**

RTSL is committed to evaluating the results of our salt reduction efforts through tracking changes in:

- Salt intake: Population-based surveys with 24-hour urine collection are the gold standard
- Salt content of foods, where relevant

## SALT REDUCTION STRATEGIES

RTSL has identified a core set of strategies from the SHAKE technical package. Support for a specific strategy in a country will depend on key sources of salt, complementary efforts and political will.

**Table 1 Summary of principle salt reduction strategies**

SALT REDUCTION STRATEGY	PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACT	SPEED OF IMPLEMENTATION	SHAKE ELEMENT
Public Education	Limited	Fast	K
Front-of-Pack-Labeling	Moderate	Slow	A
Promotion of Salt Substitutes	Moderate/Large	Medium	K/H
Food Procurement Policies	Moderate	Medium	E
Industry Reformulation of Packaged Food	Moderate/Large	Medium/Slow	H
Interventions that Address the Restaurant Environment	Not Yet Proven	Unknown	E/H

### Strategies that primarily address salt added in the home

- 1. Mass media campaigns and behavior change communications.** Public education can encourage consumers to reduce the amount of salt added in home cooking or at the table and identify and select lower salt products when purchasing foods. RTSL supports rigorously tested and evaluated media and other behavior change communications campaigns.
- 2. Low-sodium salts.** Multiple trials have found that low-sodium salts containing a mixture of sodium and potassium can improve blood pressure and cardiovascular health outcomes. The use of low-sodium salts can be increased through promotion, subsidies and even by replacing the salt sold in grocery stores with low-sodium salt.

### Strategies that primarily address salt in packaged food

- 3. Front-of-pack-labels.** Front of package labels warn consumers if products do not meet nutrition standards and provide visible, easily interpretable guidance. Critically, they can lead to reformulation by manufacturers to avoid having products visibly labeled as unhealthy.
- 4. Industry reformulation of packaged foods.** Industry reformulation can be done through voluntary initiatives or regulation. In both cases, food categories are defined and salt limits or salt reduction targets are identified for each category, allowing industry to gradually reduce salt over time. Voluntary initiatives require strong government commitment to a coordinated process and public monitoring.

### Strategies that primarily address salt added outside of the home

- 5. Institutional food standards.** In many countries, millions of meals are consumed in government institutions such as schools, hospitals. Nutrition standards for governments and other institutions can help lower the salt content of these foods and create demand for lower salt products, spurring industry innovation.
- 6. Interventions in restaurant food.** To date, there are few successful, scalable examples of interventions in the restaurant or informal food sector. Packaged food strategies such as providing salt content information and high salt warning labels can be explored in countries where chain restaurants are common. Other possibilities include restricting access to high salt foods (e.g. Uruguay) and exploring ways to institutionalize lower salt options, through use of set salt limits, food safety inspectors, chef and restaurant associations, and working with suppliers, if they can be brought to scale and rigorously evaluated.