

Sodium Reduction Messaging

Dos & Don'ts to Shake the Salt Habit

The following recommendations are based on insights gathered during workshops with salt reduction partners conducted in 2025 by Resolve to Save Lives and the Global Health Advocacy Incubator, with support from the World Health Organization.

Partners shared lessons from successful advocacy and communications campaigns, helping to identify the language, framing, and communication strategies that most effectively engaged policymakers, media, and the public. Across countries, successful messaging consistently focused on making salt reduction easy to understand, personally relevant, feasible to implement, and economically beneficial.

To use alongside this fact sheet:

- [Strategy template](#) to get your advocacy-comms plans started
- [Messaging matrix](#) to help connect the right message with the right messenger, medium, and moment
- Resources and other materials available in the [Sodium Reduction Communications Toolkit](#)

Make it easy to understand

Use language that people immediately understand. Replace technical terms and complex explanations with clear, familiar words, visuals, and examples that make salt reduction easy to grasp.

Avoid	Use
Sodium	Salt
Grams, milligrams	Teaspoons, spoons, scoops, pinch, visual demonstrations
Technical nutrition language, scientific terminology Example • Interventions, modelling, DALYs	Plain language, everyday terms Example • Solutions, research, healthy years of life lost
Dense explanations and statistics; too many statistics	Clear information, simple facts, relatable examples; no more than three statistics
Long technical reports and academic papers	One-pagers, FAQs, infographics, policy summaries

Make people care

Frame salt reduction as a way to protect families and empower consumers.

Focus on health, informed choice, and the right to clear information rather than restriction, blame, or fear.

Avoid	Use
Population-level, fear-based messaging Example • Millions will die if you don't act	Family health, family well-being Example • Reducing salt consumption helps people live longer, healthier lives, and millions of lives can be saved.) • Reducing salt at home protects your family and the health of your loved ones
Restriction-focused language Example • Do not eat salt	Informed choice, clear information, consumer rights Example • Too much salt raises your risk for heart attack and stroke
Paternalistic framing Example • Protect people from themselves • We have to help consumers because they can't make healthier choices themselves	Consumer safeguard; Structural solutions, not just individual responsibility Example • People have the right to know what's in their foods
Abstract health risks Example • Eating unhealthy is bad for you	Concrete consequences, family health Example • Long-term, daily medication use; financial and caregiver burdens on family members
Messages focused only on disease	Health harms + protecting families, protecting lower-income and vulnerable communities, equity
Technical policy language Example • Maximum sodium thresholds by food category	Clear information Example • Limits on acceptable amounts of salt that vary by type of food

Show it's doable

Show that solutions are realistic, possible to implement, and aligned with existing priorities. Emphasize local evidence, implementation pathways, and how salt reduction supports broader national health and policy goals.

Avoid	Use
Salt reduction as a standalone issue	Incorporate salt reduction into other nutrition/ diet topics and government priorities Example Hypertension and cardiovascular/heart diseases, child health, childhood obesity, obesity reduction, obesity control, food safety, NCD prevention and control, WHO Best Buys, population-based interventions, Ministry of Health priorities
Prescriptive demands Example Follow these steps exactly	Evidence-based options, practical solutions Example WHO's SHAKE the Salt Habit –second edition offers guidance on how countries can design implement and monitor salt reduction programs
Confrontational advocacy Example Crackdown on industry	Collaborative solutions, shared ownership, supportive messaging, win-win opportunities, industry readiness
Global evidence alone	Local data to turn abstract global concerns into concrete local objectives
Rapid mandates or unrealistic expectations	Feasibility, gradual/phased implementation, risk control, prevention

Show it's worth the investment

Connect salt reduction to financial benefits. Highlight reduced health care costs, improved productivity, sustainability, and the economic burden of inaction.

Avoid	Use
Health-only arguments that only speak to disease burden	Local health + economic impact; financial burden on families; lost productivity
Focusing on policy or implementation costs	Reduced health care costs by preventing disease burden; increased productivity; efficiency of salt reduction solutions; sustainability; big impact from small investments Example • “Every \$1 invested saves \$17”