

Salt policy makers eat too much salt at work

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Salt policy makers in the Netherlands are consuming more than the average daily recommended salt intake of 6 grams in one hot meal at their work canteens, finds a study in the Christmas issue published in the *British Medical Journal* today.

The authors, led by Dr Lizzy Brewster at the University of Amsterdam, say the policy makers eating at their staff canteens were consuming around 15.4 grams of salt a day. They warn that this amount of salt, compared to the recommended intake, translates to up to a 36% increase in [premature death](#).

Excess salt intake is estimated to cause 30% of all [high blood pressure](#), and many countries have programmes to encourage individuals to consume less.

The researchers focused on policy makers because they assumed they would have a high awareness of the risk of high salt intake.

They selected 18 canteens at the Department of Health, the Health Council, the Food and [Consumer Product Safety](#) Authority, university and non-university hospitals in the Netherlands. On three random days the researchers collected a typical hot lunch from the staff canteens.

The average [salt content](#) of the meals was around 7 grams - exceeding the total daily recommended salt intake of 6 grams and was high at all locations.

The authors also surveyed employees about how often they ate the hot lunch at their staff canteens. The majority (63%) said they ate the hot meal at work and another hot meal for dinner at home. The researchers estimate that if 63% of the staff ate the high salt content canteen meal and a standard meal in the evening, they would be consuming around 15.4 grams of salt daily - 9.4 grams higher than the recommended 6 grams.

The authors argue that "if people eat the meals

served at the institutions we studied, they run an estimated increase in [cardiovascular risk](#) of 32-36% more deaths from stroke and 23-27% more deaths from [coronary heart disease](#) compared with people who adhere to the guidelines."

They conclude: "Our data indicate that even salt policy makers cannot adhere to a low salt diet if they consume the hot lunch at work ... These data underline the urgency to remove the exemption of nutrition labelling for food products intended solely for use in restaurants and foodservice operations."

Provided by British Medical Journal

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