

UK study finds excessive, unnecessary amounts of salt in majority of pizzas

May 17 2023



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Restaurants and takeaway (take-out) companies are drowning our food in salt and failing to meet the voluntary salt reduction targets, as new research by Action on Salt, a research group based at Queen Mary

University of London, reveals half of all pizzas sold in the UK provide a day's worth (or more) of salt per pizza.

In spite of a so-called UK Government plan to reduce salt, many pizzas now have more salt than they did in 2014, putting customers' future health at an unnecessary risk.

To mark Salt Awareness Week (15-21 May), Action on Salt is calling for the Health Secretary Steve Barclay and the Chancellor Jeremy Hunt to work together to enforce the salt targets (as many other countries have now done) or expand the UK's successful Soft Drinks Industry Levy to excessively salty food.

Our current salt intake is the major factor that raises our blood pressure—the world's biggest killer (responsible for 60% of strokes and 50% of heart disease), with pizzas providing UK adults 3,224 tons of salt every year (enough to cover Wembley Stadium's football pitch with over 32 cm of salt).

Out of 1,387 pizzas surveyed, takeaway pizzas contain more than double the amount of salt than those bought in supermarkets. A staggering two in three (66%) pizzas sold in restaurants and takeaways contain 6g or more salt per pizza—the saltiest being Domino's "The Sizzler Standard Mozzarella Stuffed Crust" medium [pizza](#) with 21.38g. That's more than three days' worth of salt in just one meal and more salt than you would find in 3.5 jars of olives.

Restaurant and takeaway companies are showing minimal signs of improving the nutritional quality of their food, with one in two (50%) medium pizzas sold still exceeding respective salt targets, despite ample opportunity to comply. This is in stark contrast to the retail sector, where fewer than 1 in 5 (14%) exceed the maximum salt targets—a clear sign that producing pizzas with significantly less salt is easily achievable.

Sonia Pombo, Registered Nutritionist and Campaign Lead at Action on Salt, says, "Despite our reliance on the food industry to provide us with access to better, healthier options, it's infuriating to see some companies ignoring the overwhelming evidence in support of salt reduction, and worse still increasing the salt content further. These companies are showing a complete disregard for public health and are making a mockery of our voluntary reformulation program. We know it is possible to reduce salt in pizzas, as demonstrated by some responsible businesses, so there is no reason why others can't also do so."

Professor Graham MacGregor, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London, and Chairman of Action on Salt, says, "Reducing salt is the most cost-effective measure to lower [blood pressure](#) and reduce the number of people suffering from strokes and [heart disease](#) and life changing disabilities associated with this—all of which is completely avoidable. According to the Department of Health & Social Care, each one gram/day reduction in population salt intake saves more than 4,000 premature deaths per year. Given this, it's a disgrace that food companies continue to fill our food with so much [salt](#) when there is the option to reformulate, which our research shows can easily be done. The Government must act now for the benefit of our future health, and furthermore save the NHS many billions of pounds."

Provided by Queen Mary, University of London

Citation: UK study finds excessive, unnecessary amounts of salt in majority of pizzas (2023, May 17) retrieved 8 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-05-uk-excessive-unnecessary-amounts-salt.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--