

CITY OF BALTIMORE

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner
210 Guilford Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21202

For Immediate Release

CONTACT: Ingrid Antonio

PHONE: 443-984-2623

mediahealth@baltimorecity.gov

Baltimore Convenes Salt Task Force

Baltimore, Maryland (August 11, 2008): As part of Baltimore City's effort to confront the health disparities caused by cardiovascular disease, the Health Department is creating a seven-member task force comprised of industry representatives, community leaders, and academic experts to review and make recommendations to address excessive salt consumption in the city.

High salt intake is associated with high blood pressure, particularly among African-Americans, and can lead to heart attack, kidney failure, and stroke. In Baltimore, lowering excessive salt intake could contribute significantly to reducing health disparities.

"I will be very interested in hearing about the impact of excessive salt in our diet on the health of Baltimore," said Mayor Sheila Dixon. "I thank all of those volunteering their time for their effort."

The Salt Task Force will include the following members:

- Joshua M. Sharfstein, M.D., Commissioner of Health, Chair
- Melvin Thompson, Vice President of Government Relations for the Restaurant Association of Maryland
- Paulette Thompson, Health and Wellness Manager for Giant Food
- Joyce Smith, Executive Director of Operation ReachOut Southwest
- Elijah Saunders, M.D., expert on hypertension and clinical researcher at the University of Maryland School of Medicine
- Stephen Teret, J.D., M.P.H., director of the Center for Law and the Public's Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
- Stephen Havas, M.D., M.P.H., M.S., retired professor of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine

The Task Force will meet three times, beginning in September 2008.

Individuals who wish to submit comments to the Task Force on any aspect of salt intake may do so by September 5, 2008. Initial comment is requested on 3 questions:

1. Do you consider high salt intake to be a significant health concern in Baltimore? Why or why not?
2. What key factors influence salt consumption?
3. What role could city government or local food suppliers play in addressing concerns about high salt intake?

Comment should be sent to Joshua M. Sharfstein, Commissioner, Baltimore City Health Department, 210 Guilford Avenue, Baltimore MD 21202.