

CITY OF BALTIMORE

SHEILA DIXON, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mayor Sheila Dixon, Health Department Announce Findings of Baltimore City Salt Reduction Task Force Report

BALTIMORE, MD (September 30, 2009) – Baltimore City residents consume too much salt, a major health concern and a root cause of significant cardiovascular health disparities, a new Health Department report has found.

A modest reduction in city residents' daily sodium intake could help improve cardiovascular health and substantially reduce deaths due to stroke and coronary heart disease. The Baltimore City Salt Reduction Task Force report makes seven recommendations for increasing awareness of the relationship between salt and cardiovascular disease and fostering a healthier level of salt consumption across the City.

The Health Department convened the Salt Reduction Task Force as part of a comprehensive, community-based strategy to address cardiovascular health disparities in Baltimore City.

“More than 2,000 Baltimore City residents die each year from cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is also the main reason for the six-year gap in life expectancy between Baltimore City and the state of Maryland,” Mayor Dixon said. “It is important that we take action to improve the cardiovascular health of Baltimore City residents.”

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Baltimore City and a leading source of racial disparities in life expectancy. High salt intake is associated with elevated blood pressure, or hypertension, a key risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Reducing the consumption of salt across Baltimore City could help to prevent poor cardiovascular health outcomes.

In its report, the Baltimore City Salt Reduction Task Force endorsed seven strategies and recommendations as options for city government to address high salt intake in Baltimore. These include recommendations to increase public awareness of the health risks associated with excessive salt consumption, and to encourage food providers to reduce the salt content of their products.

“Addressing high salt intake is a public health imperative for Baltimore,” said Interim Commissioner Farrow. “While these recommendations do not necessarily represent an exhaustive set of options to confront high salt intake, they are clear steps forward that have unified support from a diverse set of stakeholders.”

Baltimore City's Salt Reduction Task Force includes academic and policy experts, community leaders and representatives from the restaurant and grocery industries. The members of the Task Force met to examine evidence that high salt intake is a health concern for Baltimore City, and to make recommendations for action.

"The restaurant industry is committed to working in partnership with the public health community and government to promote and engage in voluntary salt reduction initiatives. Together, we can make a positive difference in supporting our customers' interests in healthier lifestyles," said Melvin R. Thompson, senior vice president for Government Affairs and Public Policy at the Restaurant Association of Maryland.

To view the full Task Force report and recommendations for reducing salt consumption, visit www.baltimorehealth.org/disparities. For more information, contact Cat Chamberlain at 410-396-6903.

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