

New York City's Salt Warning on Hold; That's Good for Now



By Ruth Kava — March 1, 2016



[1] Salt Warning Icon, via Shutterstock

The New York City Board of Health passed a resolution last September requiring restaurant chains with 15 or more outlets to post a warning icon (left) on their menus for any food offering containing more than 2,300 milligrams of salt. That's the limit recommended by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

But the National Restaurant Association sued to halt the implementation of the law. Its suit was rejected by the State Supreme Court. But the NRA appealed this ruling, and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court granted its request for a preliminary injunction on enforcement.

No matter how this suit is resolved, it's important to note that there's more here than just a trade association advocating for its members. There really is disagreement about the supposed benefits of salt restriction for the general population.

The basis of such moves is the observation that high sodium intake is associated with high blood pressure — itself an important risk factor for cardiovascular disease and stroke. However, the data behind the restriction movement aren't as solid as many would like — in fact, there is some evidence that salt restriction might even be harmful.

We have dissected some of the arguments for and against such a move, and these can be read in detail in our newest [publication](#) [2], *Does 'Excess' Dietary Salt Cause Cardiovascular Toxicity?* by Dr. Lila Abassi, the American Council's Director of Medicine.

In part, Dr. Abassi points out that an expert panel convened by the Institute of Medicine found that, "There was insufficient consistency in quality and quantity of data to advocate for daily sodium consumption less than 2,300 mg., regarding risk of heart disease, stroke, or all-cause mortality." Yet the NYC Health Board has again taken for itself the [role of dictating](#) [3] what information

restaurants must provide.

The appeals court is expected to rule on the matter in Mid-March.

Sure, it's good for people to know what they're consuming, but that information is easily available to anyone with access to a computer. And a person who, on medical advice based on his or her own condition, has been advised to reduce their salt consumption, will need to access such information — and not depend on little salt shaker symbols.

For the rest of us, as Dr. Abassi points out, the data are not conclusive, and the Board of Health's move is simply another feel-good effort to make consumers think they're looking out for our health.

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2016/03/01/new-york-citys-salt-warning-on-hold-thats-good-for-now>

Links

[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Salt-Warning.jpg>

[2] <http://acsh.org/dietarysalt/>

[3] <http://acsh.org/news/2016/02/25/government-is-here-to-help-you-attain-good-health/>