



For Immediate Release

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New Health Tool Addresses Concerns of Sodium in the American Diet
Federal agencies call for reduction of salt in processed and restaurant foods

MADISON, WI (May 3, 2010) - Nearly 72 million, or 1 in 3, Americans have hypertension (high blood pressure) which is defined as blood pressure greater than 140/90 mmHg. This number has grown by 30% over the past 5-7 years according to National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and Census Data despite the estimated \$55.5 billion spent in 2004 to treat the condition.

For many years, scientific evidence has linked high salt intake to high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease. Despite this, Americans continue to consume nearly twice the recommended limit of sodium each day and sodium intake continues to rise. There are many reasons contributing to this rise, but health officials have identified pre-packaged foods including canned soups, sauces, meats such as ham, bacon, and sausage, processed cheeses, salted snacks as well as restaurant foods, as high sources of sodium.

Suzanne Hughes, MSN, RN, PCNA board member, commented on the challenges nurses face in instructing patients on lowering their dietary sodium intake. The most common response is 'Salt is not a problem at our house. We do not even have a salt shaker on our table.' Patients are surprised to learn that only about 6% of their daily sodium intake comes from salt added at the table. Nearly 75% of their intake comes from processed and prepared foods. The gradual lowering of the sodium content by the food industry- a population level approach- is required to address the epidemic of high blood pressure which is a key contributor to stroke, heart failure and heart attacks.

Statistics show that only 34% of those with high blood pressure treat their condition adequately. Even small changes in the American diet can make a significant impact. A recent article in the New England Journal of Medicine suggested that reducing salt intake by 3 grams (1¼ tsp) per day could prevent 44,000-92,000 deaths per year and substantially decrease rates of heart attack and stroke in the United States. This reduction could also save an estimated \$10-\$24 billion in health care costs annually.

On April 20, the Institute of Medicine released a report entitled "Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States," stressing the urgent need to reduce sodium intake in the United States. This report recommends that "The food industry, government, professional organizations, and public health partners should work together to promote voluntary collaborations to reduce sodium in foods."

As a professional nursing organization whose members work with hypertensive patients, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association (PCNA) has developed the "Blood Pressure: How do you measure up?" booklet for healthcare providers to use with patients to help manage high blood pressure.

This booklet focuses on lowering blood pressure through the reduction in the consumption of salt, as well as the importance of knowing what blood pressure numbers mean, checking blood pressure at home, getting more exercise, reaching a healthy weight and learning about high blood pressure medicines.

Healthcare providers may order 100 "Blood Pressure: How do you measure up?" booklets for free by calling 1-866-620-6947 (product ID 00000020210).

Visit <http://www.pcna.net/clinical/BloodPressure> for information on high blood pressure and to download and print a copy of the "Blood Pressure: How do you measure up?" booklet.

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PCNA is the leading nursing organization dedicated to preventing cardiovascular disease through assessing risk, facilitating lifestyle changes, and guiding individuals to achieve treatment goals. PCNA represents over 21,000 cardiovascular healthcare professionals who promote comprehensive CVD risk reduction strategies for individuals and diverse populations.