



Sentinel Foods

What We Eat in America

The Food Surveys Research Group (FSRG), in collaboration with the Nutrient Data Laboratory, identified a group of select foods to be monitored as primary indicators for assessing the potential change in the sodium content of foods in the national dietary surveillance program. Food and beverage consumption of the U.S. population was analyzed across What We Eat in America (WWEIA) Food Categories using dietary intake data from WWEIA, NHANES 2007-2008. The top contributors to sodium in the diet within a food category were examined to determine the Sentinel Foods [1, 2]. The following criteria guided the selection:

- Potential for sodium reduction
- High density of sodium (~400 mg sodium per 100 g)
- High level of sodium per report (~480 mg per report)
- Frequently consumed (~400+ reports) and providing moderate level of sodium per report
- Major contributor to sodium intake within a food category
- Basic ingredient or seasoning containing significant sodium

The initial 125 Sentinel Foods are listed in Table 1 along with corresponding database food descriptions and codes. Enhanced composition monitoring of these Sentinel Foods will assess changes in sodium content and will signal the need to examine the possibility of such modifications in similar foods. The list of Sentinel Foods may be revised to reflect variations in the food supply and food intake patterns of the population.

The Sentinel Foods protocol for sodium surveillance will be an addition to the comprehensive review and update completed by FSRG every two years of the nutrient content of all foods and beverages reported in WWEIA, NHANES. Both of these assessments respond to Recommendation 5 of the Institute of Medicine's report *Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States* that "Federal agencies should ensure and enhance monitoring and surveillance relative to sodium intake measurement, salt taste preference, and sodium content of foods, and should ensure sustained and timely release of data in user-friendly formats" [3].

References

1. Hoy MK, Goldman JD, Murayi T, Rhodes DG, Moshfegh AJ. Sodium Intake of the U.S. Population: *What We Eat In America, NHANES 2007-2008*. Food Surveys Research Group Dietary Data Brief No. 8. October 2011. Available at: www.ars.usda.gov/SP2UserFiles/Place/12355000/pdf/DBrief/8_sodium_intakes_0708.pdf
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. 2013. What We Eat in America Food Categories 2007-2008. Available at: www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/fsrg
3. Institute of Medicine 2010. *Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.