PRESS RELEASE

For release at 13:30 on 31 October 2026

Vietnamese adults consume nearly twice the recommended amount of salt: Medical associations sign consensus statement on sodium reduction for the prevention of cardiovascular disease and stroke

Ha Noi, 31 October 2026 – The Vietnam Stroke Association, Vietnam Dietetic Association, Vietnam Diabetes Educators Association, and Vietnam Nutrition Association have signed a consensus statement on sodium reduction, increased potassium intake, salt iodisation and front-of-pack nutrition labelling for the prevention of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

The statement was signed at a panel hosted by the National Institute of Nutrition entitled *"Policy Recommendations and Consensus Statement on Sodium Reduction for the Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke: Front-of-Pack Nutrition Labelling and Potassium-Enriched Lower-Sodium Salt",* held during the 2026 National Stroke Conference. Representatives of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, and other agencies and organisations attended.

Reducing sodium intake – an urgent preventive health priority in Viet Nam

According to the 2021 National Survey on Risk Factors for Non-Communicable Diseases (STEPS)[1], conducted jointly by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO), the average salt consumption of Vietnamese people is about 8.1g per person per day, nearly double the WHO's recommended level of less than 5g per day. The prevalence of hypertension among adults in Vietnam is 26.2%. High sodium intake raises blood pressure, thereby increasing the risk of stroke and other cardiovascular diseases.

The professional associations emphasized that sodium reduction is an effective and cost-efficient solution for preventing non-communicable diseases in Viet Nam. Sodium-reduction strategies should also be implemented alongside salt iodisation to achieve the dual goals of reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease and preventing iodine-deficiency disorders. Reducing salt consumption does not mean abandoning iodized salt; individuals should reduce their overall salt intake while continuing to use iodized salt.

In 2026, WHO issued the second edition of the SHAKE technical package [2] which guides countries in developing, implementing and monitoring comprehensive government-led programmes to

Lower-sodium salt substitutes contain less sodium than regular salt. They are made by replacing part of sodium chloride with other minerals such as potassium chloride or magnesium sulphate; potassium-enriched salt is the most common type.

Excessive sodium intake can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke, while potassium supports cardiovascular health. Potassium-enriched low-sodium salt has two effects: it reduces sodium intake and increases potassium intake; helping to regulate blood pressure and lower the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

[1] Ministry of Health & World Health Organization (WHO). (2021). 2021 STEPS Country report Viet Nam. https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/2021-steps-country-report-viet-nam

[2] World Health Organization (WHO). (2026). SHAKE the salt habit, second edition. Geneva: WHO. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240120341

reduce population sodium intake. Implementation of interpretative front-of-pack nutrition labelling that shows products' sodium content and the use of lower-sodium salt to replace regular table salt in appropriate settings form part of the comprehensive sodium reduction strategy.

According to WHO's 2025 guideline[3] on lower-sodium salt substitutes, adults in the general population who choose to use table salt may consider replacing regular salt with lower-sodium salt substitutes that contain potassium. This is a conditional recommendation and does not apply to pregnant women, children, people with impaired kidney function or or people with other conditions or medications that may compromise potassium excretion. People with chronic conditions, particularly kidney disease, or those taking medications that affect potassium levels should consult a health professional before using these products.

Key messages for the public: Use less salt, fish sauce, soy sauce, seasoning powder, and other sodium-rich condiments when cooking; limit processed foods high in salt; check sodium content on food labels; eat a variety of vegetables and fruits appropriate to individual health condition; and continue using iodised salt while controlling total salt intake.

Assoc. Prof. Tran Thanh Duong, Director of the National Institute of Nutrition, Ministry of Health, emphasized: *"Most of the sodium in Vietnamese meals comes from salt, fish sauce, seasoning salt, and processed foods. Reducing sodium intake by cutting back on salt and salty seasonings is one of the most effective solutions for preventing hypertension, stroke, and cardiovascular disease. The National Institute of Nutrition will continue to provide scientific evidence and technical support to promote sodium reduction solutions that are suited to Vietnam's context."*

Speaking at the discussion, Professor Lê Danh Tuyên, PhD, President of the Vietnam Dietetic Association, said: *"A diverse and healthy diet that limits salt, trans fat, ultra processed foods, and sugar-sweetened beverages will help lower blood pressure and cardiovascular risk. In addition, using potassium-enriched low-sodium salt among adults in appropriate settings is a low-cost measure and can complement current stroke-prevention interventions."*

In addition to dietary interventions, Dr Angela Pratt, WHO Representative in Viet Nam, emphasised: *"As part of a comprehensive sodium reduction strategy, interpretative front-of-pack nutrition labelling offers simple, easy-to-understand information on food packaging, enabling consumers to quickly identify a product's nutritional content and make healthier choices. In Viet Nam, implementing this measure is consistent with the National Nutrition Strategy for 2021-2030."*

During 2026–2027, the Ministry of Health is leading the revision of the Law on Food Safety. As the draft law is currently open for public consultation, experts recommend considering making front-of-pack nutrition labelling mandatory, in order to help consumers choose healthier foods while encouraging businesses to improve the composition of their products.

In parallel, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment is proposing amendments to Prime Ministerial Decision No. 1325/QD-TTg on the Approval of the Salt Industry Development Project for 2021–2030, and to Decree No. 40/2017/ND-CP on the management of salt production and trading.

[3] World Health Organization (WHO). (2025). Use of lower-sodium salt substitutes: WHO guideline. Geneva: WHO. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240105591

In this context, the panel's discussions are expected to inform policies on sodium reduction, front-of-pack nutrition labeling, and reduced-sodium salt products suited to Vietnam, drawing on scientific evidence, international experience, and proposals from professional associations.

Sharing China's experience in reducing sodium intake and implementing front-of-pack nutrition labeling, Dr Ge Zeng, Director of the Cardiovascular Health Program at Vital Strategies (US) Jinan Representative, said that in 2015 China issued a single mandatory standard for edible salt that included a definition of lower-sodium salt. This standard updated the components for lower-sodium salt set out in the previous standard issued in 1994.

Professor Bruce Neal, Senior Professorial Fellow at The George Institute for Global Health, said: *"Strong evidence shows that replacing regular salt with potassium-enriched, low-sodium salt lowers blood pressure and reduces the risk of stroke and premature death. For Viet Nam, making this simple switch widely available and affordable, with clear guidance on who can safely use it, could help prevent many avoidable deaths."*

"The event is supported by supported by the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative, The George Institute for Global Health and the Government of Ireland, and coordinated by FHI 360/Alive & Thrive."

The event is supported by supported by the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative, The George Institute for Global Health and the Government of Ireland, and coordinated by FHI 360/Alive & Thrive.

Contact:

Phạm Vũ Quỳnh Chi, Communications Officer, Alive & Thrive East Asia Pacific, pchi@fhi360.org

Event photos to be uploaded at 5:00 PM the same day at https://bit.ly/giamnatri

---

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Vietnam Stroke Association, formerly the Vietnam Association for Stroke Prevention and Control, was launched on February 28, 2008 at Cho Ray Hospital with about 300 members who are neurologists and cardiologists. The Association has advised and worked alongside health authorities, helped form a nationwide network of stroke units, and contributed to training personnel for stroke care and treatment.

- Website: https://hoidotquyvietnam.com

The Vietnam Dietetic Association is a non-profit professional organization established in November 2019. Its members are primarily hospital dietetics practitioners, including physicians, nutrition graduates, nurses, and health workers trained in dietetics. The Association serves as a forum for professional exchange and works toward better nutritional care for the public and for patients.

- Website: https://hoitietchedinhduongvietnam.com

The Vietnam Diabetes Educator Association is a socio-professional organization of Vietnamese individuals and organizations interested in the education, prevention, and treatment of endocrine and metabolic diseases, diabetes and related conditions, chronic diseases, and the major non-communicable diseases of today. Its tasks include enhancing the professional knowledge of its members and providing practical

education for patients and high-risk groups. The Association's official publication is the Endocrine Health Journal (Tạp chí Sức khỏe Nội tiết).

- Website: https://suckhoenoitiet.vn

The Vietnam Nutrition Association brings together individuals and organizations working in fields such as science and technology, production, business, culture, and community life, all closely related to the meals and nutritional status of the Vietnamese people. Its goal is to improve nutritional status and to prevent malnutrition and nutrition-related diseases, thereby improving the health and longevity of the population.

- Website: http://hoidinhduong.vn

The George Institute for Global Health is an independent medical research institute whose mission is to improve the health of millions of people worldwide through high-quality research and partnership. Its activities include preventing stroke and cardiovascular disease by promoting sodium reduction and the use of potassium-enriched reduced-sodium salt.

RESist-NCD is a four-year program (2024–2028) supporting the governments of Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Vietnam, and Cambodia in developing interventions for the prevention and early treatment of diabetes and hypertension, which are major risk factors for cardiovascular disease. The program is implemented by The George Institute for Global Health, the University of New South Wales (Australia), and the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI), in close coordination with governments, health facilities, research and training institutions, civil society organizations, communities, and international agencies in partner countries. RESist-NCD is supported by the Australian Government through the Partnerships for a Healthy Region initiative.

- Website: www.georgeinstitute.org
- LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/school/george-institute

The Embassy of Ireland in Viet Nam works to foster positive relations between Ireland and Viet Nam across a wide range of areas. Our bilateral development programme focuses on cooperation between universities in Viet Nam and Ireland, support for vulnerable communities, mine-risk education and humanitarian assistance. Improving nutrition and reducing hunger are key priorities in Ireland's development cooperation policy and have formed part of our support to Viet Nam and the region for many years.

- Website: www.dfa.ie/vietnam
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/irishembassyinvietnam
- Linkedin: https://www.linkedin.com/company/embassy-of-ireland-vietnam
- Twitter: https://twitter.com/irlembvietnam

Alive & Thrive is a global nonprofit initiative that improves the health and well-being of women and children. A&T's activities are managed by FHI 360 with funding from the Gates Foundation, the Government of Ireland, UNICEF, the World Bank, GIZ, SUN CSN, the Australian Government, The George Institute for Global Health and other development partners.

- Website: www.aliveandthrive.org
- Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/fhi360.aliveandthrive
- Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/aliveandthrive

- LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/alive-thrive
- Newsletter: https://sea-monthly-updates.mailchimpsites.com/