



# Valio and Fazer join their forces to reduce salt: the salt intake of Finns could be reduced by as much as 11%

*Valio and Fazer have together tackled the salt reduction challenge and are bringing to stores Finns' favourite products with a wholesome taste but less salt. The unique Valio ValSa® milk salt innovation makes it possible to reduce salt in food without compromising on taste.*

People eat too much salt in Finland and all around the world. Salt is the most significant risk factor of high blood pressure, and it is the biggest factor in the world reducing the number of healthy life years. Finns want to reduce their salt consumption, and nearly 30% of Finns report that they follow a low-salt diet.\*

The food industry has long been expected to provide solutions to reducing salt. Valio and Fazer, which are known for their innovativeness, have together tackled the challenge and are bringing to Finnish tables products which contain significantly less salt, but which still taste great. This kind of product development collaboration by two major Finnish companies is unique.

## Innovation you can eat

With the help of Valio ValSa®, Valio and Fazer can manufacture products that contain less salt without having to compromise on taste.

Valio is bringing to stores the Valio Polar® 15 cheese and the Valio Oivariini® spread, which have been manufactured by replacing part of the table salt with milk salt, and therefore the products have 50% less salt than ordinary margarine spreads and cheeses - without compromising on taste. Fazer will use milk salt in the manufacturing of the new, lower salt Oululainen Reilu Futissämpylä bread.

"Reducing salt without compromising on taste is an unparalleled innovation, globally. The development of the Valio ValSa® milk salt innovation has taken years, but the end result is rewarding. With this innovation, we can be part of the solution in reducing the adverse health effects of salt," says Executive Vice President Tuomas Salusjärvi from Valio.

"Fazer Bakery is renewing the whole bread product group in a big way and wants to bring new solutions to promoting well-being. An important part of this goal is reducing salt in breads, and therefore it was natural for us to start product development collaboration with Valio. We have already renewed our recipes and made changes to raw ingredients, which will help us to reduce the amount of salt in bakery products by approximately 35,000 kg in 2016. Milk salt creates new opportunities for us," explains Vice President New Product Development at Fazer Bakery, Heli Anttila.

## Milk salt contains nearly 80% less sodium than table salt

Milk salt consists of the natural minerals in milk: potassium, iodine, magnesium, calcium, as well as sodium. Milk salt contains nearly 80% less sodium than ordinary table salt. Ordinary table salt consists almost completely of sodium chloride. The salty taste in milk salt is derived from the potassium that milk naturally contains, instead of sodium. When part of the ordinary table salt used in the manufacturing of products is replaced with milk salt, the products gain a salty taste with a significantly smaller amount of sodium.

## Salt intake would decrease by 11% saving society an estimated 65 million euros

Reduction of salt in the Finnish diet would be seen in better health and cost savings, according to a study that was conducted by MedFiles for Valio and Fazer.\*\*

According to the study, the daily salt intake of Finns would decrease by 11% if Finns were to choose products with a salt level equivalent to that in products manufactured with Valio ValSa® milk salt, instead of normally salted bread, fat and cheese. The number of arterial illness events and deaths caused by them would be reduced by 3,700 cases over the next 10 years. And regarding health care costs, Finland would save up to 65 million euros over the same time period. Read more on the study results >>

Read more about the Valio ValSa® innovation and milk salt at [www.valio.fi/valsa](http://www.valio.fi/valsa). On Twitter: #suolatakoot [saltreductionproject] and #täyttämakua [fulloftaste]

*\*Health Behaviour among the Finnish Adult Population, THL, 2014*

*\*\*Effect of sodium content on arterial illness events and health care costs in Finland: observation on bread products, spreads and cheeses, MedFiles, March 2016*

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## The impact of salt reduction on arterial disease events and health care costs in Finland

*Replacing table salt partially with milk mineral salt in bread, hard cheeses and spreads would reduce adults' total daily intake of salt by approximately 11%. A reduction in salt intake and the consequent decrease in blood pressure would lead to a decrease of 3,700 in cases of arterial disease events and the resulting deaths over the next ten years. This would mean savings of 65 million euros in health care costs over the same time period.*

Together with Medfiles, a research company specialising in nutrition, health and pharmaceuticals, Valio and Fazer have carried out a health

economics study on the effects of a reduction in the amount of salt on arterial disease events and health care costs. The purpose of the health economics study was to assess the effect of reducing the amount of salt in bread, spreads and hard cheeses on daily salt intake, blood pressure and arterial disease events in adults (25–74 years old), as well as health care costs.

The study examined how exchanging normally salted bread, hard cheeses and spreads for less-salted Valio ValSa® products that include milk salt would affect daily salt intake, blood pressure, arterial disease events, as well as health care costs. The table below lists the salt content of the products used in the survey.

	Normally salted productssalt	Products containing less salt*salt
<b>Bread</b>	1.2%	0.7%
<b>Hard cheeses</b>	1.3%	0.6%
<b>Spreads</b>	1.3%	0.6%

\* ordinary table salt replaced with Valio ValSa® milk salt

### **Savings of 65 million euros in health care costs**

Replacing the table salt in bread products, spreads and cheeses partially with milk salt would reduce the total daily salt intake of both men and women by approximately 11%. Reduced daily salt intake would lower systolic blood pressure on average by 1 mmHg (millimetre of mercury) unit in both sexes.

Due to the decrease in blood pressure, arterial disease events (coronary disease and strokes) and the resulting deaths would decrease altogether by approximately 3,700 cases over the next ten years, compared to the risk calculated with normally salted products. Out of those 3,700 cases, approximately 1,000 would be fatal. Over three quarters of the decrease in artery disease events would be among men. The decrease in cases of arterial disease and deaths would result in savings for society worth altogether 65 million euros in health care costs over the next ten years if normally salted products were replaced with products that have a salt level equivalent to that achieved by the combination of table salt and Valio ValSa® milk salt.

### **Salt intake greatly exceeds recommendations**

Finns obtain more than one fifth of their daily salt intake from breads, spreads and hard cheeses. This means approximately 2 grams of salt per day for men and 1.5 grams of salt per day for women. In total, men obtain 8.6 grams of salt and women 6.3 grams of salt from their diet, while the recommended amount is up to 5 grams of salt per day.

Ordinary table salt consists almost completely of sodium chloride. Sodium is a necessary mineral for the body, but we consume ten times more than our bodies actually need (230 mg/day, 0.6 g converted to salt).

### **Two million Finns have high blood pressure**

The most important risk factor in high blood pressure is heavy consumption of salt (sodium). Approximately two million Finns have high blood pressure. Changes in health behaviour are essential in the prevention and treatment of high blood pressure. Reducing the intake of sodium contained in table salt decreases blood pressure in a dose-dependent manner. The starting doses of blood pressure medications usually achieve a decrease of 4–6 mmHg in blood pressure, and the decrease is greater with a combination of several drugs.

High blood pressure is one of the most important common risk factors for both coronary artery disease and stroke. The increase in blood pressure is affected by hereditary predisposition and health behaviour. Excessive intake of sodium increases the rate of age-related higher blood pressure and the risk of arterial disease events.

Coronary artery disease and strokes have great significance with regard to the national economy. In Finland, approximately 17,000 acute coronary artery disease attacks are treated each year, and approximately 14,000 people have a stroke each year. Coronary artery disease is the cause of death in more than one out of five fatalities.

For more information:

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Source: The effect of salt reduction on arterial disease events and health care costs in Finland: Examining bread products, spreads and cheeses, 3/2016. The health economics study was carried out by Medfiles Ltd.