Behavior-change public health campaign to reduce salt consumption amongst working women in Sint Maarten

Dr Sanne van Kampen
Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labor
Government of Sint Maarten
31 August 2023
Background

• In Sint Maarten, 32% of adults report having high blood pressure
• Salt consumption is an important contributor to hypertension
• No public health awareness campaigns focus specifically on salt reduction
Behavioral Focus and Audience

Social marketing campaign with:

- Behavioral focus: reduce salt use and consumption
- Target population: working women between 35-45 years of age employed at large hotels

Team:

Dr Sanne van Kampen
Dept of Public Health

Nr Ivanca Sterling
Collective Prevention Services

Swinda Richardson
Collective Prevention Services

Drs Raymon Jessurun
University of Sint Maarten
Formative Research

- Interview with 14 women working in one large hotel
- Knowledge, perceptions & behavior wrt home meal preparation

Main findings/Actionable insights:
- Not aware of how much salt is consumed
- Not a lot of fresh seasoning/herbs are used
- Defrosting of meat is usually done with salt
- Frozen vegetables not often used as they are considered less healthy than fresh
- No time to cook at home; 2 out of 3 meals come from workplace or take-out
“Less salt, more health”

Motivators/benefits:
• feeding family and keeping family healthy
• open to learn new ways of cooking but keeping with tradition
• get information through family, friends and social media

Barriers:
• limited access to fresh food due to high prices
• limited time to cook healthily
• reliant on habits wrt shopping and seasoning

→ Choose alternative food products or cooking techniques with less salt that are healthier and do not cost more time or money
Salt reduction campaign activities

**Activity 1**
Cooking workshops for (female) hotel staff
- NIPA will provide 2 workshops in Oct/Nov 2023
- Questionnaire about salt use before and 3 months after workshops

**Activity 2**
Signs in supermarkets to reduce high-salt products use (in 3 languages)
- Displayed in 4 supermarkets from Sep-Dec 2023
- Decrease in supermarket sale of high-salt products

**Activity 3**
Social media advertisements on Government facebook page
- Displayed on Government facebook page from Sep-Dec 2023
- Estimated number of social medial views
Less salt, more health.

When eating:
Limit fast food and avoid the salt shaker.

When shopping:
Choose natural foods. If buying processed food, choose those with less salt.

When cooking:
Defrost your meat using lemons, lime or vinegar.

Use fresh herbs, peppers, garlic or lime instead of salt or bouillon cubes.
Next Steps & Lessons Learned

Next steps:
• Finalize designs of social media ads and supermarket wobblers
• Finalize curriculum of cooking workshops

Lessons learned:
• Motivators are as (or more?) important as barriers to behavioral change
• Time and meetings required to develop creative concepts
• Importance and methods of monitoring and evaluating the campaign