



American Society for Nutrition
Excellence in Nutrition Research and Practice

March 7, 2018

Oral Comments to the NASEM Committee to Review the DRIs for Sodium and Potassium

Provided by Sarah Ohlhorst, MS, RD, ASN Senior Director of Advocacy and Science Policy

The American Society for Nutrition (ASN) appreciates the opportunity to comment on the review of the Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) for sodium and potassium. ASN is a scientific, professional society with more than 6,500 members who conduct nutrition research to help all individuals live healthier lives.

ASN is pleased that the role of sodium and potassium in optimal health throughout the lifespan and the prevention of chronic diseases will receive rigorous discussion and a thorough evidence review. It is important to continually assess current relevant data for sodium and potassium in relation to indicators of adequacy and excess, as well as prevention of chronic disease, due to many of the issues discussed here today including individual variance, lack of randomized clinical control trials, and so on. The efforts of the National Academies in reviewing and updating the DRIs for sodium and potassium have a vast impact on food, nutrition and public health policy, and therefore the health of all Americans. ASN fully supports an evidence-based systematic review, such as the AHRQ systematic evidence review, approach to highlight the current evidence on the effect of sodium and potassium intake on chronic disease outcomes and related risk factors, as well as to elucidate future research needs.

As the AHRQ review concluded more research is needed to better understand the effect of sodium and potassium on long-term clinical disease outcomes, including CVD. ASN appreciates the committee's efforts to have outside reviewers or consultants address certain physiologic issues related to reviewing and updating the sodium and potassium DRIs.

ASN supports the best available scientific data on the relationship between sodium and potassium and health outcomes at this time, as well as the desirability to have dietary recommendations that are achievable for most Americans. As we heard earlier today, the current, average potassium intake level is lower than recommended and sodium intake in the American diet exceeds 3,500 mg per day. Given this, it will take the collaboration of food, agricultural, nutrition and public health sectors; government, industry, non-profits, clinicians, researchers, and other stakeholders, to communicate the DRIs and to help ensure the American public achieve the level recommended and have the desired effects on improving public health in the near future.

Keeping sodium and potassium dietary recommendations current and based on the latest science is critical to the health of our nation and we thank you for your efforts.