

CASE HEART SYMBOL-LABELLED MEALS

**Healthy food does not  
have to be more expensive  
– on the contrary**



1 gram  
less salt



Around

**€26 million**  
saved in one year

## **CASE: HEART SYMBOL-LABELLED MEALS**

### **Healthy food does not have to be more expensive – on the contrary**

Municipalities can improve the population's health by ensuring that the meal services offer healthy meals in line with the Finnish dietary guidelines. For example, almost one million Finnish people eat their lunch at school every day.

The Heart Symbol helps people make healthy meal choices. The symbol also helps meal services prepare meals according to the current dietary guidelines. In order to fulfil the Heart Symbol criteria, the meal's salt, saturated fat and sugar content should be within the limits defined in the guidelines.

Today, around 250 restaurants already offer meals marked with the Heart Symbol. This number mostly includes public sector organisations, such as municipalities and hospitals. For municipalities, healthy food is an effective investment to promote health and work ability across the population. Offering healthy meals helps people adopt healthy eating habits and, at best, they will maintain these habits at home as well.



**One life**  
Enjoy every day.



The One Life health project strives towards a healthier Finland. The Finnish Brain Association, the Finnish Diabetes Association, the Finnish Lung Health Association, the Organisation for Respiratory Health, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Finnish Heart Association, and the Cancer Society of Finland have teamed up to promote people's health and welfare throughout their lives. Duodecim participates in the project as an expert organisation.

## Costs:

According to a report by the Finnish Heart Association, meals marked with the Heart Symbol are not more expensive than other alternatives. Organisations pay a small fee for the right to use the symbol.

## Savings:

The savings will come, for example, from the reduction of salt intake. Meals marked with the Heart Symbol are estimated to contain 1–2 grams less salt. If the entire population of Finland reduced their salt intake by one gram per day, the society would save 51–87 million euros per year in health care expenses.

According to the National Institute for Health and Welfare, the incidence of heart attacks would go down by 1,080 a year and strokes by 690 if the whole population of Finland reduced their salt intake by two grams a day. The decrease in salt intake would save the society 200 million euros per year in health care costs and increase the number of healthy life years by a total of 5,000 years.

However, only a part of the population can be influenced through mass catering services. In Finland, mass catering services play an important role in people's diets as 30–50% of employees and students eat their lunch at a staff restaurant. (Kiiskinen et al. 2008.) This means that meals marked with the Heart Symbol can have an impact on 30–50% of the salt intake of the population.

If 30% of the population reduced their salt intake by 1 gram a day, the society could save around 26 million euros a year in health care costs according to the more optimistic saving estimates (estimate of 87 million euros).

## Sources:

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- Kiiskinen et al., Terveyden edistämisen mahdollisuudet – Vaikuttavuus jakustannusvaikuttavuus [Options of health promotion – effectiveness and cost-effectiveness], Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2008.



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