

HISTORIES OF GUIDELINE DEVELOPMENT FOR THE FOURTH EDITION

12. Chemical fact sheets

12.1 Chemical contaminants in drinking-water

Sodium

History of guideline development

The 1958, 1963 and 1971 WHO *International Standards for Drinking-water* did not refer to sodium. In the first edition of the *Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality*, published in 1984, it was concluded that there was insufficient evidence to justify a guideline value for sodium in water based on health risk considerations, but it was noted that intake of sodium from drinking-water may be of greater significance in persons who require a sodium-restricted diet and bottle-fed infants. A guideline value of 200 mg/l was established for sodium based on taste considerations. No health-based guideline value was proposed for sodium in the 1993 Guidelines, as no firm conclusions could be drawn concerning the possible association between sodium in drinking-water and the occurrence of hypertension. However, concentrations in excess of 200 mg/l may give rise to unacceptable taste. This assessment was brought forward to the third edition of the Guidelines, published in 2004, and the fourth edition of the Guidelines, published in 2011.