



SALT

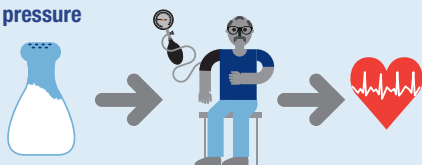
FACTSHEET

2015

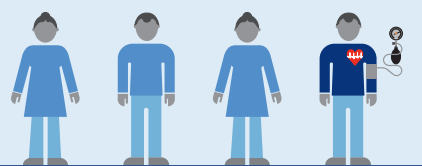
KEY MESSAGES

- High blood pressure (also called hypertension) is a leading cause of disease, death and disability, both globally and in the South-East Asia Region.
- Excess salt or sodium consumption increases the risk of developing hypertension, heart disease and stroke.
- Reducing salt intake lowers blood pressure and reduces the risk of heart disease and stroke.
- Reduction in salt intake is a proven cost-effective intervention to improve population health.

Consuming too much salt causes high blood pressure



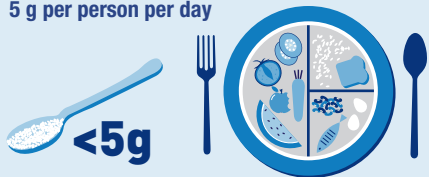
One in four adults has high blood pressure



Salt comprises 40% sodium



Reduce daily salt intake to less than 5 g per person per day



Use less but only iodized salt



Why should we care about our salt consumption?

- High blood pressure is a leading preventable risk factor for heart disease and stroke, death and disability globally, and is responsible for 9 million deaths each year.
- One in four adults in the South-East Asia Region suffers from high blood pressure.
- Excess dietary salt or sodium consumption is an important and avoidable cause of high blood pressure.
- The average daily consumption of salt in countries of the South-East Asia Region ranges between 9 to 12 g—approximately twice the level recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Reduction in salt intake is essential to achieve the global target of 25% reduction in premature mortality due to noncommunicable diseases by 2025.

Salt or sodium?

- Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt.
- The words salt and sodium are often used synonymously, although on a weight basis, salt comprises 40% sodium and 60% chloride.
- Most of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt. Sodium glutamate, commonly used as a food additive, is an additional source of sodium in some countries.
- 1 g of salt is equivalent to 400 mg of sodium; 1 g of sodium is equivalent to 2.5 g of salt.

How much salt do we need?

- Humans need very little salt for normal body functions.
- WHO recommends reducing salt intake to less than 5 g/day per person, which is equal to about a teaspoon of salt.

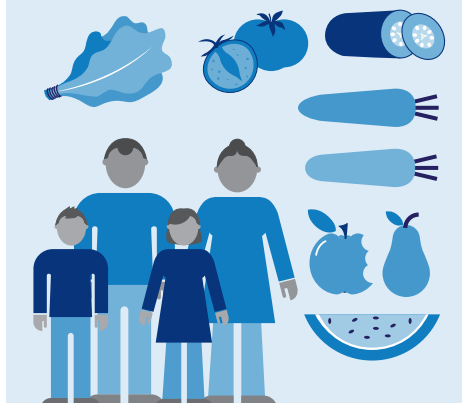
Is salt reduction compatible with iodine supplementation efforts?

- Countries should harmonize salt reduction and salt iodization efforts.
- It is possible to reduce salt consumption, while ensuring that iodine requirements are met.
- Levels of iodine in salt can be adjusted, based on regular monitoring of population intake.

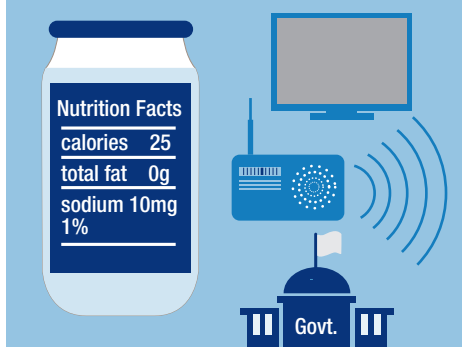
Use less salt while cooking



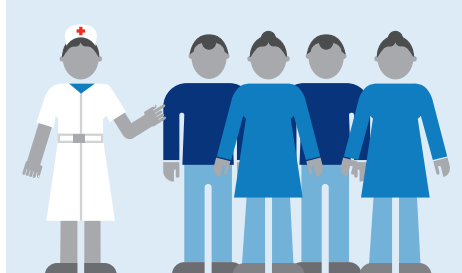
Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables every day



Promote salt reduction and implement proven policies



Educate the community



What are the major dietary sources of salt?

- Salt added while cooking
- Salt added to food at the table
- Salt present in snacks, sauces, pickles, chutneys, cheese, bread and similar foods
- Salt present in many other processed foods (so-called "hidden salt"), baked products, fast food, street food and restaurant food

What can individuals do to reduce their salt intake?

- Use less salt while cooking.
- Use fresh herbs and spices to enhance flavour and taste.
- Avoid adding salt to food at the table.
- Limit consumption of processed foods, fast food, baked products, sauces, pickles, chutneys and salty snacks.
- Select low-salt options (read labels) while eating out of home or buying prepared/processed foods.
- Ask for food with less salt at canteens, restaurants, and other food outlets.
- Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Fruits and vegetables are rich in potassium, which helps to reduce blood pressure.
- Consume less salt but only salt that is iodized.

What can policy-makers do to reduce salt intake at the population level?

- Implement salt reduction policies and programmes to reduce population salt consumption.
- Implement public awareness and education programmes about the adverse health effects of excess intake of salt.
- Regulate the food industry to reduce salt in their products, reformulate processed foods, and implement consumer-friendly food labelling.
- Educate and support street vendors and restaurant owners to reduce salt in food.
- Implement policies to increase access to and availability of low-salt foods and fruits and vegetables.
- Establish joint surveillance to monitor salt and iodine intake.

What can health professionals do to reduce salt consumption?

- Educate the community to reduce salt intake.
- Help hypertensive patients and families manage their salt intake and blood pressure.
- Engage and advocate with policy-makers to implement salt reduction policies.
- Advocate for salt reduction at health facility/workplace menus.

Bibliography

- Guideline: sodium intake for adults and children. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2012.
- Global status report on noncommunicable diseases. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014.
- Expert Meeting on Population Sodium Strategies for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the South-East Asia Region, 11–13 December 2012. New Delhi: World Health Organization Regional Office for South-East Asia; 2013.