



SALT

FACTSHEET

2015

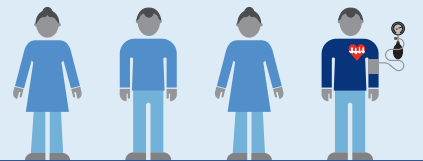
KEY MESSAGES

- 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



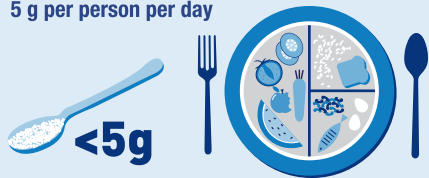
One in four adults has high blood pressure



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.

SALT

FACTSHEET 2015

Use less salt while cooking



► 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

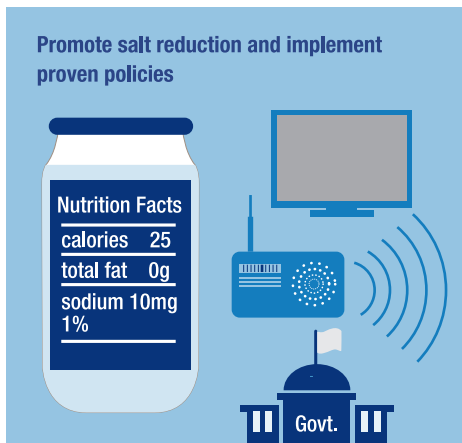
Eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables every day



► 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.

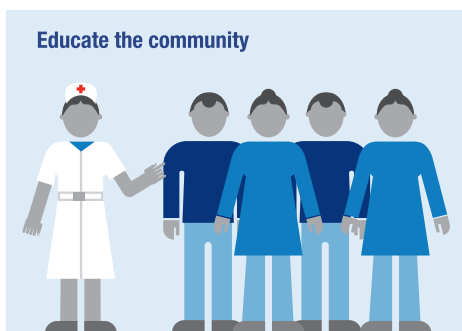
Promote salt reduction and implement proven policies



► 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.

Educate the community



► 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.