



The National Sodium Reduction Program

Subjects: Public health, Food and nutrition

Publish Date: 07/04/2013 10:00

World Health Day was marked on April 7; the Ministry of Health is Publicizing the National Sodium Reduction Program

The effects of excessive salt/sodium consumption on the body:

There is scientific evidence that provides strong proof that the more salt intake in adults is reduced, the lower the blood pressure will be.

For children, this is proved less strongly by the supporting scientific evidence. In 2003, a report of the British Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition was published. The findings of the report reinforced the existing evidence from the 90's regarding the link between high salt intake and high blood pressure. The report's conclusions stated that a reduction in salt intake would proportionally lower blood pressure levels and make a significant contribution to public health by reducing the risk for cardiovascular disease.



High sodium intake causes high blood pressure, which is a disease in itself, as well as having severe impacts on other bodily systems: it increases the risk of stroke, cardiovascular diseases, renal failure and more. One of the nutritional factors affecting blood pressure is excessive sodium intake. Worldwide, 51% of cases of stroke and 45% of cases of ischemic heart disease can be attributed to high systolic blood pressure. Diseases of this type constitute a heavy financial burden on society, as they constitute a marked proportion of Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs), which is a measure that expresses in "healthy" life years the difference between the current health status of a population that suffers from diseases and the ideal status of a population that remains disease-free until the end of its life. The worse the current health status, the larger this difference is.

The Need for a National Sodium Reduction Program

The evidence-based connection between excessive sodium (salt) intake and illness has existed for many years. In view of this evidence, leading health authorities in the world, including the World Health Organization, have begun in recent years to promote national and international programs to reduce sodium intake.

Goals of the Program

To reduce the average sodium intake in the Israeli population by 3 grams.

Duration and Target of the Program

The program has been operating for a year, and is intended to reach the target of an average salt intake of 6 grams (or less) per day by the year 2020.

Main Activities and Tests During the Course of the Program

The program is operating at a number of levels:

- The inculcation of wise nutritional habits and of the maintenance of salt intake at a proper levels.
- The reduction of sodium content in processed food, in cooperation with the food industry, the Manufacturers Association, the Chamber of Commerce, the HMOs and others.

The Checks that will be Made during the Program:

- A survey of sodium passed out in the urine, which constitutes an important basis for accurately assessing sodium intake in the population.
- Determination of the food categories that make the main contribution to salt intake in Israel, and the conducting of a survey to check the salt content of food products in the categories selected.

Program Population

The program is aimed at the overall population, including all age groups and all the various sectors of the population.

Means for Reaching the Public

The National Sodium Reduction Program will include a marketing program and an appeal to the public regarding the issue, by means of:

- A public advertising campaign to the general public to increase public awareness of the issue, and of what they can do to reduce salt intake.
- Work with the food industry to reduce the salt content of food, since some 75% of salt intake originates from food.
- Provision of practical tools to help consumers purchase wisely - by marking the front of the package with the nutritive value of sodium (as well as calories, sugars and fats), enabling products with a lower sodium content within the same category to be differentiated.

Anyone can reduce their own personal salt intake without the need for medical supervision:

Anyone can reduce their salt intake by simple steps with no need for medical supervision. Below are a number of practical suggestions and tips to help reduce the intake of sodium intake from food.

General:

- The key word is: G R A D U A L L Y.
- When purchasing products, read the labels and compare the various products: prefer foods which are similar but with a lower sodium content - for example, in breakfast cereals, cheeses and breads. The sodium content is included in the nutritional values table.
- Reduce as much as possible your consumption of high-sodium content foods, for example sausages and processed or smoked meat and fish products, olives and pickles, snack foods, nuts and seeds, salty cheeses, various types of crackers, soup powders and seasoning powders, prepared dressings (such as soy sauce, mayonnaise, mustard, pesto and ketchup), precooked meals (such as instant pasta or rice and ready-cooked frozen meals), and canned vegetables.
- During meals and between them, eat fresh vegetables and fruits: these can be cut and served as an alternative to salty snacks - cucumber slices, carrot and celery sticks, seasonal fruit slices and so on.
- During the meal, try to avoid adding salt by habit. It is advisable to taste the food, and only if necessary, to add a small amount of salt - less than what you are accustomed to. You can use pepper to add flavor instead of salt, or at least as a substitute for some of the salt.

While cooking and preparing meals at home:

- Use fresh and dried herbs when preparing sauces for pasta, rice, meat or fish - you can add basil, thyme, parsley, oregano, dill, coriander and a broad selection of other herbs, replacing some of the salt or the soup powder.
- It is possible and even recommended to use a variety of spices and seasoning vegetables, such as onions, garlic, paprika, turmeric, cumin, pepper in a variety of colors and other spices as per your personal preference. These add considerable flavor and color to the food. It is important to use ground spices that are free of additives such as salt, and to read the label.
- When preparing meat, poultry or fish, you can marinate them in a tasty marinade containing various spices and herbs, and reduce the use of seasoning powders and ready-made sauces.
- Prefer home-made sauce to purchased powdered sauce. This enables you to control the amount of salt in the sauce.
- Vegetables can be roasted in the oven and served with servings of meat and fish. Roasting concentrates the vegetable's flavor.
- Before serving fish or schnitzel, it is recommended to drip a few drops of lemon juice and sprinkle some black or white pepper to bring out the flavor.
- Instead of salty sauces (mayonnaise, mustard or ketchup) in a sandwich or pita, you can use slices of tomato or some other vegetable. It is also possible and desirable to use a smaller amount of sauce, and to make up for this with vegetable slices.

- ▶ For breakfasts or evening dinners, prefer porridges, muesli or granola which contain smaller amounts of sodium. It is possible, and even recommended, to prepare this yourself at home from oats with added milk and seasonal fruits.

Can non-gradual salt reduction cause damage?

When you abruptly reduce salt in your diet, food might seem tasteless and bland. It is therefore important to reduce salt intake and the consumption of sodium-rich foods gradually, and to adjust to the new flavors of the food. You need to be patient: the process usually takes a few months. Non-gradual salt reduction will not cause damage. Such reduction is difficult, however, due to the tastes to which you were accustomed.

Important information:

Among children and youths, sodium intake is higher than in adults, due to higher consumption of processed foods and snack foods. This can foster high blood pressure and obesity in these age groups.