

## **DECREASE SALT. INCREASE LIFE**

According to WHO, about 9.8 million people die every year due to hypertension related complications. Hypertension is considered a silent killer producing heart disease, kidney failure and strokes. About 35% of world population above the age of 25 suffer from hypertension. One of the important strategies to lower hypertension in the population and its complications is reducing salt intake. Developed countries like Finland, United Kingdom, Australia and Canada have been actively campaigning for salt reduction in the population. In these countries, there has been a close association between government and NGO's for this purpose. Finland was the first country to show an enormous health benefit by reducing salt in the diet. Not only the population's health improves, there is also a great benefit in saving health expenditure related to heart revascularization and dialysis.

The average intake of salt in the Indian diet varies from 10-15 grams per day. There is a paucity of recent data, especially with reference to the processed food in the country. The WHO's recommendation of salt intake from all sources is less than 5 grams per day. Salt or sodium is present in natural food, it is added while cooking and also used as a preservative for processed food. Considering the rapid economic growth that is happening in our country with urbanization and increased demand for processed food, it is imperative that we act at the earliest to control salt intake of Indian population.

Salt or Sodium in various forms has been used as a preservative for several thousand years .It enhances the taste, prevents growth of harmful microorganisms and can improve the texture of food, Taste is often a habit and high salt intake can saturate the taste buds. If you lower salt intake for 2 weeks you can start appreciating low salt intake and other tastes. With the availability of refrigeration and other preserving methods like ultrafiltration, vacuum packing etc the sodium use should come down. However this has been a responsibility of the food manufacturers who should voluntarily bring down the salt content. UK has been very successful in this aspect and the population's salt intake has dropped by 2 gms in the last decade. Sodium in various forms is used as a flavoring, buffering, anticaking, thickening and stabilizing agent. The biggest culprit is in baked goods specially bread and instant noodles. Some of the tips to reduce salt intake are to get used to low salt to allow the taste buds to recover, eat fresh food when possible, add less salt in cooking, not to add extra salt on table (a special problem in India since salt is served in the food plate as a routine and salt shakers for soups) and use herbs and spices as flavoring agents. It is essential to target the young college and school students and educate them. It is a myth that Indians require more salt due to the weather and sweating. The maximum salt lost is in urine (that's why 24 hours urine sodium is measured to calculate a person's salt intake). Sweat once acclimatized has very low sodium .Increased sweating requires more water intake and not salt. It is also a myth that children require more salt. According to WHO children require less salt than adults.

Sapiens Health Foundation a NGO committed to the cause of kidney failure patients has been campaigning actively for the last 5 years throughout India to reduce the salt intake. Print and visual media have been used enormously and walkathons have been conducted in several places for this purpose. The foundation in association with IIT Madras held the SALT fight conference. The theme of the conference was to create an awareness in the population with regards to the amount of salt intake permitted, relationship between salt and disease specially hypertension and measures to reduce salt consumption. The conference was held on November 2017 at IIT Madras.

For further information, please log on to [www.sapiensfoundation.org](http://www.sapiensfoundation.org) and become a member of low salter group ([www.losalter.org](http://www.losalter.org))



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*Sapiens Health Foundation and Cystinosis Foundation India serve under privileged patients along with creating awareness on prevention of renal disease. He has taken on now salt reduction campaign across the country.*