# **Cutting salt intake by 10% could save millions of lives: Study**

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PARIS • Reducing salt intake worldwide by just 10 per cent could save millions of lives, a study reported yesterday.

Government-led public service campaigns could massively cut mortality and disability caused by salt-triggered heart attacks and strokes for just over 10 US cents (14 Singapore cents) a year per person, researchers calculated.

Even without including healthcare savings, "a government-supported national policy to reduce population sodium intake by 10 per cent over 10 years would be cost-effective", the authors concluded in the medical journal BMJ.

Most adults exceed the recommended maximum salt level of 2g a day, resulting in 1.65 million deaths from heart disease every year, according to the World Health Organisation.

Research has shown that national policies to curb salt consumption can reduce the number of people affected by high blood pressure and heart disease. But few countries have assessed the cost of such programmes.

A team of researchers led by Dr Dariush Mozaffarian from the Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy calculated what it would cost to put in place a "soft regulation" strategy - in coordination with industry - for 183 nations.

They took into account age and sex distributions in estimating both the costs and health effects. They also tallied the number of years lost to poor health that could be averted - a measure called disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) - with a salt-reduced diet.

The study concluded that cutting salt intake over a decade would avoid about 5.8 million DALYs every year, at an average cost of US$1.13 a person over the 10-year period. The cost for each year of healthy life gained was roughly the same as what is currently spent on drugs used to prevent cardiovascular disease, they noted.

A separate study published in the BMJ yesterday said that people who suffered migraines were at a higher risk of stroke after surgery.

This means that a history of migraines, which affect about one in five, should be taken into account when weighing the pros and cons of undergoing an operation, said the research team from the United States, Denmark and Germany, which calculated the risk of stroke at 2.4 attacks for every 1,000 operations - a number which rose to 4.3 in 1,000 for migraine patients.