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**BBC**

**Cutting salt 'should be global priority'**

By Matt McGrath Science reporter, BBC World Service

The UN must make reducing salt intake a global health priority, say UK scientists.

Writing in the British Medical Journal they say a 15% cut in consumption could save 8.5 million lives around the world over the next decade.

[The report](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.d4995) says practical steps to reduce consumption should be drawn up without delay.

If voluntary measures do not work, the food industry should be compelled to cut salt levels, it says.

The report - by researchers at the Universities of Warwick and Liverpool - says that after cutting tobacco consumption, getting people to eat less salt would be the most cost effective way to improve global health.

The researchers say there is a "consistent, direct relation between salt intake and blood pressure".

High blood pressure in turn is linked to heart disease, stroke and kidney problems.

They point to the US, where cutting salt intake by a third would save tens of thousands of lives and save up to $24 billion annually in health care costs.

But with 70% of deaths from strokes and heart attacks occurring in developing countries, the report says the impact of reduced intake would be global.

Industry responsibility

However, the researchers warn that both widespread education and engagement with the food industry will be needed to limit the salt content of processed foods.

One of the report authors, Professor Francisco Cappucio, of the University of Warwick, said the food industry had a "huge responsibility" to take action.

He said: "The reformulation of food in their hands could deliver a massive impact to public health in the same way that at the moment it is contributing to a huge burden of disease.

"They train your taste buds - the more salt you eat the less salt you taste the more salt you want, to get that saltiness.

"It is quite a vicious circle, and these circles create profit and it is important that these profits are balanced against the health of the population."

But Morton Satin, a vice president at the industry body, the Salt Institute, rejected the report out of hand.

He said: "The salt reduction agenda has become an urban myth - far more based upon populist ideology than objective science."

Mr Satin said there had been a number of studies in the past year that have questioned the prevailing wisdom on the health damage caused by salt.

He said: "This compulsion to regulate is being pushed by a gaggle of activist ideologues who have long ago abandoned science to take up the salt-bashing cudgel."

Blood pressure cut

Professor Cappucio pointed to successful salt reduction programmes in Finland, Portugal and Japan which all showed substantial reductions in blood pressure following cutbacks in salt consumption.

He has little time for the efforts of the food and salt industry to re-open the debate on health effects.

"It's no surprise that there has been some antagonism from the food industry, trying to create some false feeling of controversy to confuse consumers.

"There is a covert approach to protect their profits at a time where a reduction in salt intake might erode some of them."

The latest report comes ahead of a UN high level meeting on non-communicable diseases in September which will draw up plans to fight heart disease, diabetes and other ailments over the next decade.

Metro (UK)

August 12, 2011 Friday   
Edition 1;   
Scotland

**AGAINST THE GRAIN: Cutting [...];   
MINICOSM SCIENCE & DISCOVERY IN BRIEF**  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 13  
  
**LENGTH:** 74 words

AGAINST THE GRAIN: Cutting salt intake by just half a teaspoon a day could save 20,000 lives in Britain each year, researchers say.

The 3g (0.1oz) reduction would cut fatalities from heart disease and stroke by up to 12,000 and 8,000 respectively, say experts from the University of Warwick.

Current average intake is about 9g (0.3oz) - 50 per cent higher than recommended.

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The Daily Telegraph (London)

August 12, 2011 Friday   
Edition 1;   
Scotland

**Cut 'killer' salt**  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 12  
  
**LENGTH:** 108 words

Cutting salt consumption by half a teaspoon a day could save 20,000 lives every year, according to a study.

The three gram cut would reduce deaths from heart disease and stroke by up to 12,000 and 8,000 respectively by lowering blood pressure, said experts.

Current average intake is about nine grams a day - 50 per cent higher than recommended - with three-quarters of the salt coming from processed food.

Writing online in the British Medical Journal, researchers at Warwick University have called for public awareness campaigns and the setting of progressive salt targets for food manufacturers.

They also want population surveys of salt consumption.

The Mirror

August 12, 2011 Friday   
3 Star Edition

**SALT OF THE EARTH;   
1/2 TEASPOON LESS A DAY WOULD SAVE MILLIONS OF LIVES GLOBALLY**  
**BYLINE:** LACHLAN MACKINNON  
  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 35  
  
**LENGTH:** 252 words

REDUCING salt intake by a third would save millions of lives worldwide.

The three-gram cut - or half a teaspoon less each day - would prevent 20,000 deaths by strokes and heart attacks in the UK alone each year, say scientists.

And with three-quarters of the salt coming from processed food, they want limits on how much producers add to their products.

Not only will the reduction to average daily consumption - a government target by 2012 - save lives, it will also save the NHS millions in expensive operations.

The scientists, led by Warwick University's Professor Francesco Cappuccio, also want publicity campaigns and surveys of salt intake. s

Prof Cappuccio, writing online in the British Medical Journal ahead of a UN conference next month, said high blood pressure was the biggest killer of adults worldwide.

He added: "Evidence from a very wide variety of studies shows a consistent direct relation between salt intake and blood pressure."

"The blood pressure lowering effect of reducing salt intake is effective in men and women, in all ethnic groups, and all ages."

The same three-gram cut in the USA would result in up to 120,000 fewer cases of coronary heart disease, up to 66,000 strokes and 99,000 heart attacks annually.

The World Health Organisation wants to lower salt intake globally to less than 5g a day by 2025.

Researchers say targeting consumers is not enough as most salt is added before products are sold.

They warned: "Denial and delay will be costly in terms of avoidable illness and expenses."

The Sun (England)

August 12, 2011 Friday   
Edition 1;   
National Edition

**'Cut salt by 3g to save life'**  
**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. 35  
  
**LENGTH:** 100 words

CUTTING salt consumption by just half a teaspoon a day could save 20,000 lives in Britain every year, according to a study out today.

The 3g reduction to the Government's daily target of 6g would cut deaths from heart disease by up to 12,000 and stroke by up to 8,000 - and save billions of pounds in healthcare costs.

Excess salt raises blood pressure - and 75 per cent of our intake comes from processed food.

Dr Francesco Cappuccio, of the University of Warwick, called for voluntary or mandatory action to set lower salt targets for manufacturers.

The study is published in the British Medical Journal.