

Pressure group study backs salt reduction

By Michelle Perrett

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There is *"strong evidence"* that a reduction in salt contributed to lower blood pressure and a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, the review by campaign group Action on Salt (AoS) has claimed.

Published in *Nature Reviews Cardiology*, the report, 'Role of salt intake in prevention of cardiovascular disease: controversies and challenges' described recent studies, which have cast doubt on the importance of reducing salt intake, as being of *"poor scientific quality"*.

It explained that *"reverse causality"* often arose in studies where participants with pre-existing medical conditions, such as chronic kidney disease or diabetes mellitus, were recruited.

Critical of the studies

AoS was critical of these studies as they suggested that a lower salt intake was associated with a higher CVD risk. Sick individuals were likely to eat less food and consume less salt due to their poor health, it added.

The review also said that a *"measurement error"* occurred in studies that used a single spot urine sample to estimate an individual's usual salt intake, as these could be inaccurate.

Dr Feng He, lead author of the review and researcher at Queen Mary University of London, said: *"Studies of poor scientific quality have unfortunately tried to cause controversy in what is recognised as a robust public health strategy."*

"However, the totality of evidence shows reducing our salt intake will be immensely beneficial in preventing strokes, heart attacks and heart failure, the commonest causes of death and disability in the world. The question is not 'should' we reduce salt intake, but 'how'."

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'Beneficial in preventing strokes'

According to the Food and Drink Federation (FDF), manufacturers in the sector were continuing to cut salt in their products in line with government targets, which were set by product line.

However, the FDF said: *"Companies are now finding reductions harder to achieve without compromising product safety or jeopardising taste, texture or shelf-life."*

The latest statistics from Public Health England, published in 2016, showed that average salt intakes were decreasing, although they still exceeded the recommended daily intake of 6g per day.

Adult intakes decreased from 8.8 g/day in 2005/06 to 8g/day in 2014.

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