

National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) - Assessment of dietary sodium

Research programme: National Diet and Nutrition Survey

Study duration: 2015-02-01

Summary

Adults aged 19-64 years in Northern Ireland took part in the sodium survey by providing a 24-hour urine collection. Samples were collected over seven months (February to August) in 2015. This is the best method for measuring salt intake. The reason being is that it is difficult to precisely measure salt intake either by estimating the amount eaten using a food diary or by taking blood samples.

A high salt intake can contribute to the development of elevated blood pressure (hypertension). Hypertension is a risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The UK Government recommends adults and children aged 11 years and over should have no more than 6g salt per day.

Salt Reduction

Around 75% of the salt we eat is already present in manufactured foods. The FSA has made considerable effort in recent years to raise public awareness of salt intake and health to enable individuals to make informed choices through information (including front-of pack nutrition labelling) and education. In parallel action has also focused on reformulation of manufactured foods and voluntary salt (sodium) targets for 85 food categories were first set by the Food Standards Agency (FSA) in 2006. These targets were revised in 2009 and 2011 to take account of food industry achievements in salt reduction. The current targets, which have been agreed across the UK, were set for achievement in 2017.

Key Findings

- In 2015 the average salt intake for adults aged 19 to 64 years was 8.6g/day (on average 43% higher than the recommended maximum); 10.0g/day for men and 7.1g/day for women.
- There was no statistically significant difference between the salt intake for adults in Northern Ireland compared to England.
- Salt intake was significantly higher for adults in Northern Ireland than in Scotland.
- Salt intake for men in Northern Ireland was significantly higher than that for men in both England and Scotland.

Research report

Northern Ireland

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