



## Salt Consumption and Its Impact on Health

**Hanaa Amiirah Sohawon\***

University of Mauritius, Mauritius

**\*Corresponding author:** Hanaa Amiirah Sohawon, University of Mauritius, Reduit, Mauritius, Tel: +230 57994605; Email: s\_hanaa11@hotmail.com

**Received Date:** January 10, 2019; **Published Date:** January 17, 2019

### Abstract

A small amount of salt is important for good health; it helps to maintain the correct fluid and electrolyte balance in the body. However, most people consume much more sodium than they need for good health. Salt consumption has increased nowadays and most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged, processed, store-bought, ready-to-eat and restaurants. There is health risks associated with high salt intake, including high blood pressure in sensitive individuals. A cross-sectional study was carried out to evaluate the reported daily consumption of salt among Mauritian adults and to know their attitudes towards salt consumption and its recommended daily intake. The 300 respondents under study were aged between 30 and 60 years old and consisted of both males and females. A survey-based questionnaire was designed to carry out the investigation, and the results obtained were interpreted and analyzed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0). From the results obtained, it was found that 51.3 % of the respondents were aware of the local daily salt intake recommendation, and reported putting 1 teaspoon (5 grams) of salt, as per the recommendations, during their food preparation. Furthermore, the food frequency questionnaire included in the survey revealed to us that the consumption of highly salted processed foods such as fast foods/ready-to-eat foods and canned foods was quite high among the respondents. Therefore, the study demonstrates that nutrition education programs need to be set up so as to raise awareness on the importance of salt in the diet.

**Keywords:** Salt; High blood pressure; Highly salted processed foods

**Abbreviations:** WHO: World Health Organization; AI: Adequate Intake; UL: Upper Limit; g: Grams; BP: Blood Pressure; ICF: Intra-Cellular Fluid; ECF: Extra-Cellular Fluid; ECV: Extra Cellular Volume; Na<sup>+</sup>-K<sup>+</sup>-ATPase: Sodium-Potassium Adenosine Tri-Phosphatase; DASH: Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension; FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

### Letter to Editor

As an Editorial Board Member of the Journal of Nutritional Dietetics & Probiotics, I am looking forward to

stay up-to-date regarding nutritional research and breakthroughs in the medical and nutritional field. Human nutrition is of utmost importance in our everyday life and thus, trying to improve our lifestyle and dietary habits is essential to improve our health. As a public health nutritionist, I am willing to share the knowledge which I have acquired so far, and this will be possible via the platform offered by the Journal. Within the scope of this Journal, we will get acquainted to food policies, decision-making, new laws and food legislations in different countries around the world. We can thereby use these examples and try to apply them to our local context.

In the Journal, we will have the opportunity to learn more about different studies which are being carried out in the field of nutrition, and thus, we will be able to expand our knowledge. Having participated in various international conferences, the Journal provides a platform where I will be able to share the new studies which have been carried out in the field on nutrition. Other members will be able to benefit from it, and we can share our opinions on different nutrition-related topics. Food consumption around the world has changed drastically over the past years, and in this Journal, we will be able to learn about the dietary habits in different parts of the world, and how food consumption impacts health of the specific population concerned.

## Introduction

Salt is the main source of sodium in the diet. A small amount of salt is important for good health; it helps to maintain the correct fluid and electrolyte balance in the body. Therefore, it is essential for us to maintain the right fluid and electrolyte balance. However, most people consume much more sodium than they need for good health. Salt consumption has increased nowadays and most of the sodium we eat comes from packaged, processed, store-bought, ready-to-eat and restaurants foods [1]. Various studies have shown that there is health risks associated with high salt intake, including high blood pressure in sensitive individuals. Therefore, health authorities around the world have recommended limitations of dietary sodium. A technical report produced by WHO and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) recommends the consumption of 5 g of sodium chloride or less (or 2 g sodium) per day as a population nutrient intake goal, while ensuring that the salt is iodized [2]. This expert consultation stressed that dietary intake of sodium from all sources influences blood pressure levels in the population and should be limited so as to reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.

In Mauritius, the prevalence of hypertension is 37.9 %: 35.4 % for women and 40.5 % for men [3]. This is quite alarming and it tells us that if effective measures are not taken immediately to address the problem, the situation

might deteriorate. The aim of this project is to assess the knowledge and attitudes regarding salt consumption among Mauritian adults. The main objectives are to investigate whether or not Mauritians are aware of the local recommendations of salt to be consumed per day based upon the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations; to know the attitudes of Mauritian adults towards salt consumption and its recommended daily intake; and to evaluate the reported daily consumption of salt among Mauritian adults. By assessing the knowledge and attitudes regarding salt consumption among Mauritian adults and by evaluating their reported salt consumption, we will be able to better target the population at risk of developing hypertension and heart diseases, and consequently propose corrective measures that need to be taken. A cross-sectional study will be done which will be based on quantitative data. The quantitative data collected will then be statistically analyzed. Data entry and analysis will then be carried out using special statistical software, the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 20.0).

## Acknowledgements

I am greatly thankful to my MSC project supervisor, Associate Professor Prity Pugo-Gunsam, from the University of Mauritius. My thanks also go to my parents, my brothers, sister, all the respondents, my friends and other persons who have, directly or indirectly, helped me in carrying out this study.

## References

1. Institute of Medicine (2005) Dietary Reference Intakes for Water, Potassium, Sodium Chloride, and Sulfate. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
2. World Health Organisation (WHO) (2007) Salt intake around the world: Background document prepared for the Forum and Technical meeting on Reducing Salt Intake in Populations.
3. Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Survey (2009), Mauritius.