

High salt intake means more strokes and heart disease

A high salt intake is linked with a significantly increased risk of both strokes and cardiovascular disease, according to a new EU-funded study published this week in the British Medical Journal (BMJ). The collaborative research was carried out by teams at the University of N...



A high salt intake is linked with a significantly increased risk of both strokes and cardiovascular disease, according to a new EU-funded study published this week in the British Medical Journal (BMJ).

The collaborative research was carried out by teams at the University of Naples Federico II in Italy and the University of Warwick in the UK. EU support for the study came from the HYPERGENES ('European network for genetic-epidemiological studies: building a method to dissect complex genetic traits, using essential hypertension as a disease model') project, funded with EUR 10.2 million under the Health Theme of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

The research looked at the results of 13 published studies on salt intake and high blood pressure, involving 170,000 people, and explored possible links between high blood pressure and high salt intake.

The results showed clearly that a difference of 5g of salt a day is equivalent to a 23% difference in the rate of strokes and a 17% difference in the rate of cardiovascular disease.

The link between a high salt intake and strokes and cardiovascular disease has been well known for some time, and public concern has already led food manufacturers to reduce the amount of salt in their products. The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended that a reasonable salt intake is 5g (one teaspoon) a day. But in

the developed world, most people's daily salt intake is estimated to be far higher - closer to 10g a day. This figure is also almost certainly an underestimation because the high amount of salt in many foods, especially takeaways and canned and packaged foods, means it is very difficult to measure salt intake precisely.

The study contributes to a growing body of evidence that salt reduction could significantly help reduce the level of strokes and cardiovascular disease. Global figures show that 62% of strokes and 49% of cases of coronary heart disease are caused by high blood pressure, and that treatment to reduce blood pressure can help prevent some cases of stroke and coronary heart disease. Eating less salt will also help to reduce healthcare costs as heart disease and strokes are placing huge pressure on healthcare services throughout the EU.

Previous studies across countries with high incidences of strokes and cardiovascular disease have estimated that around 850,000 lives could be saved every year if people reduced their salt intake to 5g a day.

The authors of the study say that cutting salt intake by 5g a day could prevent 1.25 million deaths from strokes each year and nearly 3 million from cardiovascular disease, and that their results support the desirability of encouraging people to reduce their salt intake.

Countries

Italy, United Kingdom

Related articles



Scientists find genetic markers to identify potential heart attack victims

9 December 2010



Scientists say new gene variant can cut hypertension risk

5 November 2010



Novel dual-action drug can tackle hypertension

30 March 2010



EU findings open door to better drugs for fight against heart attacks and strokes

11 December 2009

Last update: 25 November 2009

Permalink: <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/31508-high-salt-intake-means-more-strokes-and-heart-disease>

European Union, 2025