

Current Health Event

Diet-related NCDs & salt intake

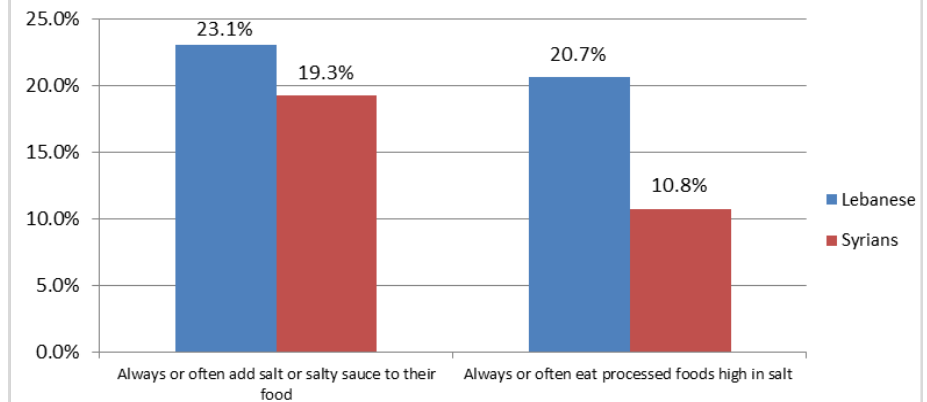
Globally, nutrition-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are on the rise. With many factors involved, sodium intake remains one of key importance in this epidemic, as the relation between high sodium intake and raised blood pressure with increased mortality and morbidity is well established.

Editorial note:

The majority of people consume too much sodium through salt (on average 9-12 g of salt per day), nearly twice the recommended daily salt intake limit of 5g (equal to 2g of sodium per day). This is oftentimes coupled with insufficient potassium intake which leads to high blood pressure, thus increasing the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

Globally, more than 36 million people die every year from Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), whereby 13% are due to hypertension. In Lebanon, around 89% of all deaths (32,000 deaths) are due to NCDs and nutrition-related NCDs are on the rise. The intake of dietary sodium in the Lebanese population was estimated by Powles et al. in 2013 to be 3.13g per person per day, based on a systematic analysis of data from 1990 to 2010. This is in line with preliminary findings of the 2017 NCD prevalence study (NCD Stepwise) in Lebanon amongst a sample of 1899 Lebanese and 2134 Syrian adults aged 18-69 years of age which show that the mean sodium intake per day is 3.3g and 3.6g for Lebanese and Syrians respectively, with a higher intake for males compared to females in both populations. According to the same study, and as shown in figure 1, around 23% of Lebanese and 19% of Syrians always or often add salt to their food before eating or as they are eating. In addition to table salt and the salt added to food during cooking, most

Figure 1: Preliminary findings from the 2016 NCD prevalence study in Lebanon



salt intake is from processed foods (such as fast-food meals, processed meat, cheese, etc.) as well as from food items that are consumed frequently and in large amounts (such as bread). In Lebanon, bread and bread-like products (such as “Mana’eesh”) are the major contributors to increased salt intake as well as processed meats (12%) and dairy products (9%) (Almedawar et al., 2015).

In a study by Nasreddine et al. (2014) that examines salt-related knowledge, attitude and self-reported behaviors amongst adult Lebanese consumers, it was found that salt awareness is rather low with only a few proportion adopting behavioral practices to reduce their salt intake. Lebanese consumers have limited knowledge of the main sources of sodium in their diet, with only a quarter of the study population correctly recognizing processed foods as the main source of dietary sodium.

Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020

WHO Member States set a global target to reduce by 30% the mean population intake of salt/sodium by 2025. To help achieve this vision, the WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020 provides a roadmap of policies and interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs. The objectives are mainly focused on international cooperation and advocacy, accelerating response by strengthening health systems, reducing modifiable risk factors, as well as monitoring the trends and determinants of NCDs.

WHO’s Ambition and Action in Nutrition 2016–2025

Anchored in the global diet-related NCD targets (2013-2020), WHO’s Ambition and Action in Nutrition (2016-2025) was developed in line with the 2016-2025 UN Decade of Action on Nutrition and in support of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, where nutrition is considered a key enabler to a set of NCD targets. WHO advocates for accelerated action to achieve these targets.

Notifiable Diseases in Lebanon [cumulative n° of cases among all residents (among Syrians)] as of 20 October 2017

| Disease | 2016 | 2017 | Sept. | Oct. |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|---------|--------|--------|
| Vaccine Preventable Diseases | | | | |
| Polio | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| AFP | 123 (17) | 64 (13) | 5 (1) | 1 (0) |
| Measles | 44 (18) | 89 (29) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Mumps | 486 (86) | 200(36) | 7 (3) | 2 (0) |
| Pertussis | 97 (18) | 77 (17) | 3 (0) | 1 (0) |
| Rabies | 0 (0) | 1 (1) | 1 (1) | 0 (0) |
| Rubella | 12 (6) | 8 (5) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Tetanus | 2 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Viral Hep. B | 367 (48) | 248(38) | 9 (1) | 10 (0) |
| Water/Food Borne Diseases | | | | |
| Brucellosis | 402 (165) | 330(90) | 29 (3) | 6 (2) |
| Cholera | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Hydatid cyst | 11 (2) | 14 (4) | 1 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Typhoid fever | 598 (11) | 514(15) | 65 (0) | 9 (1) |
| Viral Hep. A | 519 (78) | 513(79) | 78(16) | 29 (4) |
| Other Diseases | | | | |
| Leishmaniasis | 58 (52) | 93 (82) | 0 (0) | 0 (0) |
| Meningitis | 458 (63) | 287(60) | 32 (6) | 11 (2) |
| Viral Hep. C | 116 (8) | 95 (9) | 8 (3) | 5 (1) |