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Salt story is solid

Every now and then the media run with headline news that salt is not a problem for health.

The European Heart Network (EHN) recently published *Diet, Physical Activity and Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease in Europe*. This paper contains an independent review of the evidence on salt (sodium) and cardiovascular diseases. The review concludes:

- The precise amount of daily salt intake among adults in Europe is not known, but probably lies around 10 g/day.
- Falls in salt intake reduce blood pressure as do increases in the intake of potassium-rich foods such as fruits and vegetables. Recent follow-up data of randomised trials, with modest salt reductions, show clear evidence of a reduced blood pressure and a fall in cardiovascular morbidity and mortality.
- The mechanisms of how salt raises blood pressure are still being explored.
- A maximal daily consumption of 5 g/day seems reasonable for adults in the interim. In the longer term, a population goal of less than 4 g/day is proposed. In order to achieve this goal on a population-based level, policies for a progressive decrease are needed.

EHN emphasises the importance of taking the totality of the evidence into consideration. There is no doubt, across Europe we are eating too much salt - far more than is needed. The overconsumption entails an enormous burden of disease, especially from heart disease and stroke, as shown by the body of evidence. EHN commends the EU salt initiative as well as national salt strategies. Our message to the politicians is to get on with it and you will save both lives and money.

Recent references:

Diet, Physical Activity and Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease in Europe. European Heart Network. Brussels, November 2011

<http://www.ehnheart.org/publications/publications.html>

European Guidelines on cardiovascular disease prevention in clinical practice (version 2012)

<http://www.escardio.org/guidelines-surveys/esc-guidelines/Pages/cvd-prevention.aspx>