

# Salt found in African, Caribbean foods 'shocking'

February 4 2011

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Image: Jerk Chicken

(PhysOrg.com) -- Popular dishes from African and Caribbean restaurants in London can contain the same level of salt as that in over 30 packets of ready salted crisps, according to new research which highlights how salt intake could potentially contribute to high blood pressure (hypertension), stroke and heart problems in people of Black-African descent.

A number of popular Nigerian, Ghanaian, and Caribbean meals were selected and analysed in the study, with the results showing very high [salt](#)

content in dishes from restaurants across many London Boroughs.

For example, an average portion of Rice and Beans (Waakye) contained a staggering 12g salt, equivalent to that in 30 packets of ready salted crisps. An average Jollof Rice meal was found to contain 8.6g of salt in a single portion, equivalent to that in over 20 packets of ready salted crisps. An average meal of Jerk Chicken with Rice and Peas was found to contain 7.6g of salt, equivalent to 19 packets of ready salted crisps. In the UK, adults are advised to consume no more than 6g salt per day (about one teaspoon).

The research, highlighted this week in a letter to the [British Medical Journal](#), was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and carried out by UCL academic Dr Derin Balogun and her team of volunteers at Heart Campaign, a voluntary organisation she founded aiming to raise awareness of cardiovascular and related health issues.

As well as looking at [restaurant meals](#), the study looked at popular indigenous breads and seasoning cubes used at home, finding high levels of salt content in these as well as in meals from restaurants. For example, a loaf of hard dough bread was found to have 19g of salt, and a Knorr seasoning cube 5.4g.

Discussing the research, Dr. Balogun said: “Salt levels in food have been shown to have a big influence on blood pressure (hypertension) and our findings indicate that the staggering levels of salt in popular African and Caribbean foods served in restaurants across London could provide a clue to the reasons for [high blood pressure](#), stroke and cardiovascular complications in people of Black African descent in London and around the world.

“These are major public health concerns and it is surprising that no work has been done to research the salt content of the foods indigenous to this

group, and that there have been no specific dietary recommendations unique to the prevention and management of hypertension in UK African-Caribbeans.

“Though the salt content of these restaurant meals may not reflect home cooking habits, our findings regarding manufactured breads and seasoning cubes provide a major starting point to address dietary salt intake in people of Black African descent globally. We have an ongoing study aiming to ascertain the current use of these seasonings in homes across London.

“We urgently need to raise awareness amongst these communities that some of the foods they love could be hurting the health of their hearts. This isn’t about telling people not to ever have these foods, but to think about how often they eat salt rich meals and how they could potentially change their cooking habits to cut down on dangerous levels of salt.”

On 24 March 2011, Heart Campaign to will host an event in partnership with UCL, to discuss the issues raised in this research including local governments, health policy makers, health care providers, experts in the field of hypertension, and members of relevant communities.

Provided by University College London

Citation: Salt found in African, Caribbean foods 'shocking' (2011, February 4) retrieved 24 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2011-02-salt-african-caribbean-foods.html>

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