Fewer people adding salt at the table

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The number of people in England adding salt to food at the table fell by more than a quarter in the five years following a national campaign, according to research published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*.

In 2003, the UK Food Standards Agency and the Department of Health launched a national salt reduction campaign to raise public awareness of the impact of salt on health and to work with the food industry to reduce the amount of salt in processed foods.

Although previous research found that the national campaign led to an overall reduction in salt intake, this is the first study to look directly at the effect it had on the amount of salt people add to their food at the table.

Researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine looked at salt intake from 1997-2007 in large nationally-representative samples of more than 6,000 adults living in England. They found that since the campaign launched in 2003, the proportion of people reporting that they add salt at the table dropped from 32.5% to 23.2% in the following five years.

Lead author Jennifer Sutherland from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said: "Salt use at the table accounts for 15-20% of total salt intake. Our study shows that from 1997-2007 there was a steady decline in salt use at the table, but this reduction was greater after the introduction of the salt reduction campaign in 2003."

Researchers also found differences in the amount of salt added at the table by different population groups. Women were less likely to add salt at the table, as were those from younger age groups, non-white ethnic groups, higher income households and people living in central or south England.

Co-author Dr Alan Dangour, a nutritionist at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine said: "These findings indicate a need to tailor future salt reduction efforts to specific target groups. More work is needed as a quarter of adults still add salt at the table and salt intake levels in the UK remain well above the recommended amount of 6g per day. Eating too much salt can lead to raised blood pressure, which increases the risk of heart disease and stroke."

More information: Jennifer Sutherland, Phil Edwards, Bhavani Shankara and Alan D. Dangour. Fewer adults add salt at the table after initiation of a national salt campaign in the UK: a repeated cross-sectional analysis. *British Journal of Nutrition*. DOI: dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0007114512005430

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