

Salt: friend or foe?

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The following work talks about salt which is a biological necessity for the survival of all known living creatures, including humans and also presents its benefits and dangers to human body.

Salt is a biological necessity of every human being. It was considered an extremely precious item in the distant past and had strong symbolic value, both positive and negative. Salt was felt to promote health. Today very few people realize that in Latin the words for health and healthy, *salus* and *salubris*, were derived from *Sal*, i.e. from salt. When Frenchmen greet each other saying ‘*salut*’, very few people realize that they are actually referring to salt. Many words in our language can be traced back to salt. The payments for soldiers were not coins, but a certain amount of salt, the *salarium*, which is still today at the root of the words *salary* in English and *salaire* in French. The *salarium* for soldiers is also at the origin of the modern words *sold* and *soldier*. The major components of salt are: sodium and chloride which are necessary for the survival of all known living creatures, including humans [1].

The total world production of salt is estimated at 250 mln tones, the top five producers being: USA, China, Germany, India and Canada. Salt for human consumption is produced in different forms: unrefined salt such as sea salt, refined salt such as table salt, iodized salt. Iodized salt helps to reduce the incidence of iodine deficiency in humans’ body. Iodine is important to prevent the insufficient production of thyroid hormones that can cause different diseases such as cretinism, goitre and other thyroid problems [2].

In our modern diets today, we are warned of over-indulging in salt. Indeed, excessive salt intake has become a serious health problem for many people. But our bodies cannot

function without salt. Specifically, we need the mineral sodium in salt for the proper functioning of our nerves and muscles. It also acts as bacteria killer to ensure food safety. Sodium helps to maintain the water balance in our bodies. But in the same time salt is a poison that our body keeps building up until it causes many discomforts and diseases, such as: edema, high blood pressure, heart congestion, heart disease, kidney stones etc. Salt has been indicated as one of the primary or contributing causes in almost all cases of cancer. Doctors came to the conclusion that lowering salt intake by 3 g/day in the general population would reduce stroke by 13 % and heart diseases by 10 %. As a guide, a child should consume salt as follows:

- Less than 12 months - less than 1 g/day
- 1 to 2 years old - maximum 1g/day
- 3 to 6 years old - maximum 1.2g/day [2].

In the conclusion I could say that salt can be our best friend if it is consumed in a small quantity and our worst foe if we consume an overabundance of salt. Life is a precious gift. We only live once so we must take care of our health because like Mark Twain said “Every human being is the author of his own health or disease”.

Bibliography:

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2. Arhives-ouvertes.fr Arched – Dijon, 23-25 June 2008 *Dynamics settlement pattern, production and trades from Neolithic to Middle Ages.*