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# Tendencias

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## WHO calls for creating laws that reduce salt in foods

Cutting salt consumption by 15 percent could prevent about 9 million deaths by 2015.

BY **REUTERS** - 26/05/2010 - 11:02

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 Governments around the world could save on healthcare costs and prevent millions of premature deaths if they introduce legislation to reduce salt levels in foods, according to a nutritional advisor of the World Health Organization (WHO).



Franco Cappuccio, head of the collaborating center of WHO for nutrition, said that voluntary measures in the food industry had resulted in some progress, but that lawmakers must now take evidence on the matter and induce changes in the tastes of citizens.

"There is total consensus that salt is bad for us, we eat too and we should consume less," Cappuccio said in an interview with Reuters.

But Cappuccio, professor of cardiovascular medicine at the Warwick University, which is based on WHO's nutrition center, said the powerful pressure of the beverage and food industry, whose profits are growing because of the added salt, efforts to reduce delays consumption.

Reducing salt intake helps lower blood pressure substantially, which in turn reduces the risk of heart attacks and strokes (CVA). Hypertension is the leading cause of death worldwide, with 7.5 million deaths per year.

One 2007 study reviewed all available evidence to date and concluded that cutting salt intake by 15 per cent could prevent around 9 million deaths by 2015.

Other Jobs in March showed that a reduction of just 10 percent in the United States could prevent hundreds of thousands of heart attacks and strokes and allow the government to save 32,000 million dollars in health costs.

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There is little doubt that we eat too much salt. In the UK, the average adult intake is about 8.6 grams per day, while in the United States is 10 grams, almost twice as suggested by WHO.

Until the recommendation of the United Nations agency to eat 5 grams of salt in excess of the 1.5 grams that need to live.

#### FROM INDUSTRY

"Most of the salt consumed in the Western world, in fact about 80 percent comes from salt added in food, and only 20 percent comes from salt or salt used for cooking," said Cappuccio .

"In terms of freedom of the consumer, actually we have no choice. In short, multinationals feed most of the world," he added.

However, the professor acknowledged that there are some positive aspects.

United States, the Department of Health of the City of New York is leading a "national initiative Salt Reduction" for cities, states and health organizations working with food manufacturers and restaurants to reduce 20 per cent of salt intake in the next five years.

In the UK, public campaigns and efforts of the Food Standards Agency to work with manufacturers to promote the reduction of salt usage helped the average daily consumption decrease to 8.6 grams, from about 10 grams consumed a decade ago.

"We know from scientific studies that reducing salt intake a little each day, every week and every month (...) you can control the palate," said Cappuccio.

"So we can hold people, and the whole population, to enjoy food with less salt," he concluded.

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