Some simple sodium salt reduction strategies can avert many disorders, says IMA

Indian diet has changed over the years and it is imperative to reduce the consumption of processed food, which is high in sodium content

New Delhi, 18th July 2017: As per a recent study, an average Indian consumes 10.98 grams of salt per day, which is 119% more than the recommended limit of 5 grams per day by the World Health Organization (WHO). An excess of salt can result in high blood pressure, which is a leading cause of cardiovascular diseases (CVDs) and the resultant deaths. According to the IMA, making certain lifestyle changes and limiting the intake of dietary sodium can help avoid risk factors for these diseases.

The Indian cuisine is high on salt. The "salt to taste" phrase becomes a misnomer in the Indian context what with its usage in curries, salads, and other dishes, and reaching extremely high levels in foods like pickles. Add to this the consumption of fast food and processed food, which further increases the chances of acquiring certain disorders.

Speaking about this, Padma Shri Awardee Dr K K Aggarwal, National President Indian Medical Association (IMA) and President Heart Care Foundation of India (HCFI) and Dr RN Tandon – Honorary Secretary General IMA in a joint statement, said, "The Indian diet has undergone a drastic change over the last many years. We eat less of pulses, fruits and vegetables, and the quantity of processed and fast foods is on the rise. This kind of diet is rich in salt, sugar, and harmful fats and therefore, the likelihood of high blood pressure, obesity, and CVDs is also on the rise in Indians today. With the fast-paced lives that we lead, there is no time to cook food at home and therefore, people prefer eating out. Instant food options are available everywhere but people do not make it a point to read the food labels and understand what the food items constitute. Many of these contain excess sodium salt which can be detrimental to our health."

About 40% sodium is found in common table salt. Sodium is used by the body in small amounts to maintain fluid balance. It is extremely imperative for diabetics to consume a diet low in salt because diabetic hypertensive patients can develop coronary artery disease or an enlarged heart.

Adding further, Dr Aggarwal, said, “Packaged and prepared food is high on salt content. Salt is used as a preservative to make food taste good. Restaurant food is also high in salt as are certain food items masked as healthy. It is a good idea to read the nutrition facts mentioned on the label to
gauge the amount of salt in it. With some effort, it is possible to adjust to eating less salt in 6 to 8 weeks”.

**Few strategies for sodium salt reduction are as follows.**

- Make reading food labels a habit
- Stick to fresh foods rather than their packaged counterparts
- Avoid spices and seasonings that contain added sodium
- Check restaurant websites before dining out; request that your food be prepared without any added salt
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt
- Choose ready-to-eat breakfast cereals that are lower in sodium
- Rinse canned foods to remove some sodium
- Buy low-sodium, reduced-sodium, or no-sodium versions of foods
- Do not put salt, even on the dining table
- Avoid APC, Achar, Papar, Chatni, as all these are high in salt

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**About IMA:** Indian Medical Association is the only representative, national voluntary organization of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well being of the community at large. It has its Headquarter in Delhi and State / Terr. Branches in 30 States and Union Territories. It has over 2,60,000 doctors as its members through more than 1765 active local branches spread across the country.

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