

Consumer Guidance Note on Iodised Salt

In the recent past we have received many queries regarding iodised salt. We are sharing this in public interest as a part of our continued public health and education efforts. Here are some quick facts about iodised salt.

Iodised Salt-A public health success story of India

Daily consumption of Iodised Salt – A Healthy Habit

Why do we need iodine?

- Iodine is an essential micronutrient that is required in a small quantity by the body, every single day.
- According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), iodine deficiency is the single most important cause of preventable brain damage or mental retardation worldwide.
- Iodine deficiency results in permanent brain damage, birth defects, stillbirths, mental and physical retardation, goitre and poor functioning of the thyroid gland.
- Thus, iodine is vitally important for infants, children, pregnant and lactating mothers.

Why should we consume Iodised salt?

- Loss of iodine from the soil because of leaching results in lack of iodine in foods grown on that soil.
- Fresh seafood does not have enough iodine to fulfill the daily requirement of iodine.
- Indian soil is poor in iodine, so India is at risk from iodine deficiency. Over a 100 countries are at risk of iodine deficiency.
- We Indians need to consume iodine daily because we do not get it in sufficient quantity from our diets.
- Since salt is consumed everyday and in small quantities, eating iodised salt can help meet 100% of our daily requirement of iodine.
- Sea salt is a poor source of iodine. Consuming sea salt gives us less than 5 microgram of iodine per day. We require a total of 150 micrograms of iodine, per day.

How did salt Iodization start?

- The Government of India started fortification of salt with iodine in 1962 based on scientific evidence from the Kangra Valley study in Himachal Pradesh.
- The Kangra Valley study, carried out by Indian scientists in 1956, demonstrated the effectiveness of iodised salt in preventing goiter.
- The private sector and the Government have worked together to eliminate iodine deficiency disorders (IDD).
- Today more than 800 small, medium and large-scale salt manufacturers are producing iodised salt in the country.
- Salt fortified with iodine was first used in US & Switzerland way back in 1923. Today, iodised salt is being consumed in 108 countries.

How has Iodised salt improved our health?

- In the last 2.5 decades iodised salt has contributed to saving approximately 4 billion IQ points in India.
- Currently, 78% of households in India consume adequately iodised salt. This saves nearly 280 million IQ points every year.
- Goiter and other Iodine Deficiency Disorders have also reduced significantly due to use of iodised salt.

Know your Iodised salt:

- Just enough quantity of iodine is added to iodised salt, so that we can meet 100% of our daily requirement of iodine. Loss of iodine in salt due to transport, storage and cooking is already taken into account.
- Any excess iodine is excreted through urine so iodised salt taken in limits is safe for human consumption. The benefits of use of iodised salt far outweigh the minimal risks and iodine is essential for mental and physical development.