

Salt Intake and Dietary Habits among Lithuanian Adults

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Objective: Sodium reduction is an evident strategy to decrease the risk of cardiovascular disease. The study aimed to investigate sodium intake levels in selected adult population, and to study knowledge and habits of salt consumption in Lithuania.

Methods: Data following variables were collected during the National NATRIJOD Project. Salt intake was estimated by calculating 24h urine sodium from samples. A questionnaire inquiring about sociodemographic characteristics, comprehensive histories of diet and medical records was completed.

Results: 888 participants were included in the analysis, with a mean age of 47.4 ± 12.1 years, and with men accounting for 47.5%. Men had a significantly higher BMI (27.2 ± 4.2 kg/m² vs. 25.9 ± 5.0 kg/m², $p < 0.001$), and had a higher average salt intake than women (11.7 ± 5.8 g/24h vs. 8.4 ± 4.1 g/24h, $p < 0.001$). Only 57.7% of adults took salt-reduction measures and 59.7% of the respondents could accurately determine the recommended amount by WHO Guidelines. Our questionnaire revealed that Lithuanian men tend to have unhealthy food choices more often than women: with consumption of processed foods (31.2% vs. 10.7%, $p < 0.001$) and eating out (50% vs. 22.9%, $p < 0.001$). Women adopted more salt-reduction behaviors (65.5% vs. 49%, $p < 0.001$), were less likely to eat salted processed fish (91.2% vs. 86.7%, $p < 0.001$), processed meat (65% vs. 55%, $p < 0.001$), or boiled eggs (67.2% vs. 56.1%, $p < 0.001$).

Conclusion: Salt consumption is significantly impacted by unhealthy lifestyle choices, which affects men population more. Strategies to address the challenges of high sodium intakes are crucial to prevent the following complications.