

SODIUM CONTENT AND THE MOST IMPORTANT DIETARY SOURCES OF SODIUM IN A SAMPLE OF STUDENT POPULATION

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Abstract

High dietary sodium intake is an important public health issue. A high level of sodium intake is a risk factor for stroke and cardiovascular diseases. High sodium consumption is also associated with risk of osteoporosis, kidney disease and stomach cancer. Knowledge about sodium consumption and food sources contributing most to sodium intake can be useful in reducing salt intake. There is no country-specific sodium reduction policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The aim of this study was to determine sodium consumption in food, and to assess the most contributing sources of sodium in nutrition of student population in the city of Banja Luka, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Students (n = 176) of the University of Banja Luka completed a questionnaire on their: gender, age, faculty attended, and the food frequency dietary recall. The sodium content in foods was calculated using the data obtained by analyzing salt content in foods (n = 55 food items). The salt content was analyzed by the Mohr method by titration with $AgNO_3$. Contribution of different food groups to the total sodium intake was calculated.

The mean estimated daily sodium intake from FFQ was 3,349 mg (95% CI, 3,231 - 3,469). The food groups that contributed the most to the total sodium intake of the students were processed meat products (29.37%), fast food (28.84%) and bread and bakery products (24.21%). The sodium intake among student population is higher than recommended. The most important source of sodium are fast food, bread and bakery products and cured meat products.

The findings may be a call for organized and comprehensive public health interventions for reducing salt intake in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Key words: Sodium content in food, Salt, Students.