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Salt content in Food provided by catering food sector in Saudi Arabia

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Background: Salt (sodium chloride) is vital molecules for human being. In diet, salt used widely and daily for preserving food, enhancing flavour. Also, in food industry, salt is essential additive for food processing and manufacturing because of its low cost and varied properties. Dietary salt is one of the main risk factors of non-communicable disease. Sodium reduction showed improvement in the health outcomes and lowering risk factors. In Saudi Arabia, there is a general paucity of research investigating population consumption and dietary content of salt. In term of food eaten out of home, there are worldwide limited published data on restaurant food content of salt. In Saudi Arabia, there are no data on restaurant food or fast food content of salt. This research aims to investigate and assess salt content in catering food sector in Saudi Arabia

Methods: Experimental study, using chemical lab analysis data of 1653 food items from 57 food catering serves providers. Data analysis includes mean salt content and the ratio percentage of salt content out of WHO recommended salt intake (5 g/day).

Results: The food groups with the highest average salt content (g/100g) were in dressing and condiments (1.54), extra and add-on (1.47). The lowest average value was in beverages (0.06) and dessert (0.34). The top ratio percentage of salt content per 100g were in dressing and condiments, extra and added-on, meats, and chicken with more than 30%, 29%, 25%, and 25% respectively. The ratio percentage of salt content per serving size were 230 % meals, 92% Pizza, 65% red meat and 64% chicken.

Conclusions: From public health prospect, this study importance is as a baseline study to monitor trends in salt levels over time, as well as provide a starting point to set potential future salt reduction targets for food providers sector.

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