

Is Too Much Salt Making Kids Obese?

Children are eating too much salt, and it's increasing their risk of becoming overweight or obese, say Australian researchers. Even more concerning was their finding that those who ate the most salt also had the most abdominal obesity—the most dangerous type of fat that leads to heart disease and diabetes.

The study, which included children ages 4 to 12, found that 70 percent of them ate more salt every day than the maximum recommended.

Since much of the day's salt intake is excreted in the urine, researchers asked children to collect their urine for a day to get an accurate measure of how much salt they were eating.

"We found that 70 percent of Australian children are eating over the maximum amount of salt recommended for good health," said lead researcher Dr. Carley Grimes. "In this study, children were eating on average 6 grams of salt a day, which is over a teaspoon, and they should be aiming to eat about 4-5 grams a day."

Every additional gram of salt the children ate raised their risk of being overweight or obese by 23 percent. "Such high intakes of salt are setting children up for a lifetime risk of future chronic diseases such as high blood pressure and heart disease," she said.

Grimes said that much of the salt the children consumed came from everyday foods such as bread, cheese, ham and sausages.

"Foods that contain higher levels of salt may enhance the flavor of foods which are often also higher in fat and energy, and a salty diet may also encourage greater consumption of

high-energy, sugar-sweetened beverages when these are available,” she said.

“This study is ringing alarm bells as we now have good evidence to indicate the need to cut the amount of salt that our children are eating,” Grimes said.

The study results were published in the *British Journal of Nutrition*.

In the United States, about 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese. The number of obese children tripled from 1971 to 2011, and, according to , childhood obesity is the No. 1 health concern of parents.

For the original article, visit .