



One spoon less of salt, sugar, oil: Doctor's orders

Cutting intake of these ingredients is the best way to curb lifestyle diseases, says Indian Medical Association

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A teaspoon less of salt, sugar and oil – that's the Indian Medical Association's mantra for tackling lifestyle diseases and pressuring the government and industry to limit the quantity of these vital, yet potentially harmful, ingredients in popular foods.

The IMA, a body of over three lakh doctors, wants to sensitise the public to the hazards of these food substances and motivate them to reduce their intake by one spoon of each ingredient, per person per day.

Excessive consumption of salt, sugar and oil has been linked to several life-

threatening lifestyle diseases such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes, and chronic kidney disease.

"For starters, doctors will spread this basic awareness aggressively. It will be followed by a campaign asking the government to come out with salt and sugar reduction guidelines for the food industry. Then we will reach out to the industry as well," said Dr. Umesh Khanna, chairman of the IMA's Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) project.

Dr. Khanna, who also heads the Mumbai Kidney Foundation, said that

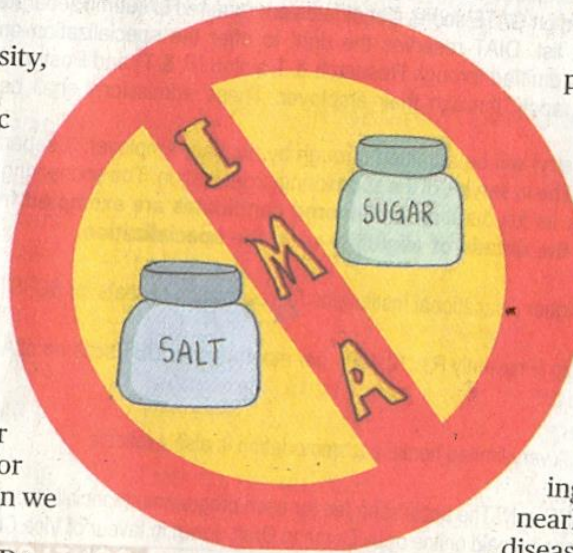


ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

excessive salt consumption is one of the major causes of high blood pressure (BP), heart disease, stroke, and kidney ailments.

Nearly 40% of CKD patients are diabetics, while 60% of them have both BP and diabetes, conditions where salt and sugar intake plays a big role.

Oil intake too has been linked to obesity, which in turn could lead to BP and diabetes.

The three ingredients are linked to nearly every major lifestyle disease.

The World Health Organisation prescribes one teaspoon of salt, six to eight teaspoons of sugar, and four teaspoons of oil per person per day. However, the IMA said, the average Indian

consumption is a worrisome two to three teaspoons of salt, 16 to 20 teaspoons of sugar, and eight teaspoons of oil per person per day.

"We will soon be petitioning the government to push the food industry to display the salt contents and also suggest ideas to bring in low salt variants of popular foods. This should be done not only for branded products but also for local items. Similar initiatives will also be planned for sugar and oil control. If the government issues mandates for the food industry, we can definitely bring about changes in the public's eating patterns," said IMA coordinator Dr. Jayesh Lele.