

Knowledge and practice of edible salt usage among female staff of the Jaffna Municipal Council

R. Saravanan¹, V. Dinushiyan¹, M.N.N. Hidhayathullah¹, B. Kumarendran², V. Sujanitha^{3,4}

¹*Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

²*Department of Community and Family Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

³*Department of Medicine, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna*

⁴*Teaching Hospital Jaffna*

Background and objective: Empirical evidence suggests that edible salt consumption is high in Jaffna. The objective of this study is to assess the knowledge and practice of edible salt usage and determine the factors associated with practice of edible salt usage among female staff working at the Jaffna Municipal Council.

Methods: This descriptive cross-sectional study was done using an interviewer-administered questionnaire among all female staff (n=255) working in the Jaffna Municipal Council during October and November 2019. Data were entered in EpiData and analysed using SPSS. Scores were assigned to individual knowledge components and a composite score was developed. Chi-square test was used at 5% critical level.

Results: Response rate was 100%. Majority of the participants were aged over 40 years (56.5%, n=144), had studied up to A/L (64.7%, n=165), were Hindus (79.2%, n=202) and married (74.9%, n=191). Over 90% were aware that high salt is harmful to health (91.8%, n=234) and increases the risk of hypertension (92.9%, n=237). Over half (56.1%, n=143) did not look for the salt content in food labels. Age (p<0.001), educational level (p<0.001), marital status (p<0.001) and household size (<0.001) were associated with practices of salt usage.

Conclusion: Although awareness on harmful effects of salt is high among female staff of the Jaffna Municipal Council, nearly half do not check for the salt level in food labels. Age, educational level, marital status and household size are associated with practices of salt usage. Measures should be taken by public health authorities to motivate the public to check food labels before purchasing packaged food items.

Keywords: Salt Use, Jaffna Municipal Council, Knowledge, Attitude, Practice