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Ban cheap junk food, says Warwick University professor

19:00, 16 SEPTEMBER 2015 BY EMMA MCKINNEY

Francesco Cappuccio, professor of cardiovascular medicine and epidemiology at the University of Warwick's medical school is making the appeal

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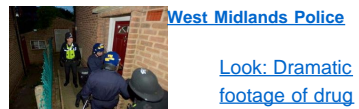
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A Midland World Health Organization adviser is calling on the government to stop food manufacturers and distributors producing and selling unhealthy, cheap, and salty junk food.

[Francesco Cappuccio](#), professor of cardiovascular medicine and epidemiology at the

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[University of Warwick's medical school](#) is making the appeal after conducting 30 years of research into the diets of populations around the world.

His latest study indicates that across Europe people of low socio-economic background eat more salt than those on higher incomes – which can contribute to lower life expectancy.

Prof Cappuccio said: “People from poorer backgrounds not only die sooner but spend more of their lives with disabilities. Inequalities in nutritional and socio-economic status translate ultimately into inequalities in health.

“The government can do something about this by discouraging manufacturers from producing cheap, salty food and distributors from selling them.

“These are the types of foods consumed by those on lower incomes because they are inexpensive but ultimately they have a detrimental effect on your health.”

The study into [salt intake in Italy](#) also unearthed a significant north–south divide. Participants living in less affluent parts of the country had significantly higher salt intake than elsewhere.

In a previous study, Prof Cappuccio found similar results across Britain where salt intake is higher further north in Scotland compared to more affluent, southern parts of the British Isles. He believes that his latest study demonstrates that social inequalities in salt intake are a Europe-wide problem.

The research examined 3,857 men and women aged between 39 and 79. They were chosen randomly across 20 Italian regions as part of a bigger national cardiovascular survey.

The research team measured the amount of sodium in the urine of participants - an indication of salt consumption. They found that across Italy there was an association between salt intake and income and educational attainment.

Those in lower skilled jobs had almost seven per cent more sodium in their urine compared to those in top managerial jobs. There was a similar relationship between education as those who were educated to just junior school level ate almost six per cent more salt than those with university degrees.

National guidelines advise that adults should eat no more than six grams of salt a day, which is approximately equivalent to one teaspoon - and children should eat less. Previous studies show that a five-gram per day higher salt intake is associated with a 24 per cent higher risk of stroke.

Prof Cappuccio said: “Dietary salt, primarily sodium chloride, is commonly used for food preservation and seasoning.

“In most westernised countries, like the UK, approximately 75 per cent of salt consumed is hidden in processed and restaurant foods whereas only about 15 per cent comes from discretionary use such as added at the table or in cooking by the consumer or food handler and 10 per cent from natural sources.

“We now have convincing evidence in Britain and across Europe that more regulatory actions and mandatory enforcements are needed to deliver a reduced-salt environment for all to benefit from.”

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