

Frequently asked questions on Iodine Deficiency Disorders

1. What is Iodized Salt?

Ans:-Iodized salt is common salt to which a very small quantity of an Iodine compound has been added. Iodized salt looks, tastes and smells exactly like common salt and is used in the same way, and for the same purposes, Iodized salt is used to prevent iodine deficiency disorders (IDD).

2. What is Iodine?

Ans :-Iodine is a natural element, a mineral, and like carbohydrates, fats, proteins, and vitamins, is an essential constituent of human diet, Iodine is also called a “micronutrient” (like vitamin A and iron) because it is required in very small amounts by our body.

2. How much iodine does a person normally need?

Ans :-The daily requirement of iodine for an adult is 150 micrograms. Pregnant women and lactating mothers however, need more iodine (200 micrograms on average).

The total iodine requirement for a person living up to 70 years of life would add up to less than a teaspoonful. However, as there is no storage organ for iodine in the body, it is necessary for iodine to be included in our daily diet. The usual sources of iodine containing foods are meat, fish, vegetables, milk, cereals and water.

3. How do we become iodine deficient?

Ans:- Our normal requirement of iodine comes directly or indirectly from crops grown on iodine rich soil and from fish and seaweeds. So, when the soil of any area lacks iodine, the crops too are deficient in this essential nutrient. People, who eat these crops regularly, do not get their requirement of iodine and ultimately develop iodine deficiency.

4. How is iodine used by the body?

Ans:- The thyroid gland is an (endocrine) gland located in the front of the neck. Iodine is used by this gland to produce thyroid hormones.

5. Why is iodine important?

Ans:- Thyroid hormones are essential for normal growth, development and functioning of both the brain and body. Lack of iodine results in deficiency of these hormones and results in a wide spectrum of disorders, collectively called iodine deficiency disorders (IDD). Iodine deficiency can lead to goiter, cretinism, deafness, dumbness, squint and mental retardation.

6. Why is it important for pregnant women to have sufficient iodine in her diet?

Ans:- In the mother's womb, a baby/feetus needs a steady supply of iodine for the normal growth and development of its brain and body. Only the mother can provide this. But if the mother is iodine deficient, the child too becomes iodine deficient. If the woman's deficiency is severe, the child's brain and body are seriously and permanently damaged and the child becomes a cretin, unable to hear, talk, walk or think normally. Iodine deficiency during pregnancy may also result in abortion or stillbirth.

The critical period for brain growth is from conception to the first three years of life. Optimum iodine nutrition during this period is absolutely essential for normal brain development.