

Iodized salt continues to provide adequate iodine to Palestinian children

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Despite widespread household food insecurity, Palestinian children living in the West Bank are iodine sufficient

Micronutrient deficiencies are among the key nutrition challenges facing the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR) and the Arab world. Low iodine intake are still being reported in several countries of EMR, particularly among children and women of childbearing age.

As of 2017, 4.8 million Palestinians lived in the State of Palestine. 45% of the total Palestinian population was composed of children, with 43% of them living in the West Bank and 48% in the Gaza Strip. Restrictions on the movement of Palestinian goods and people were imposed in September 2000 following the second intifada (uprising), affecting movement both across borders and within the Palestinian Territory. These restrictions have been accompanied by an increase in the rate of stunting in children under the age of 5, and 33% of Palestinian households were food insecure in 2010.

In Palestine, as a strategy to combat iodine deficiency, salt iodization was initiated in 1996. In the present study, a cross-sectional survey was carried out to assess the nutritional status of a sample of randomly selected children and adolescents attending schools in the West Bank. The study team surveyed 22 schools run by the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and the Palestinian Government. They randomly selected students from the first (mean age 6.7 years), sixth (11.8 years), and ninth grades (14.8 years). Data were obtained from 1484 students.

The study measured thyroid hormones as a functional indicator of iodine status. Based

on the levels of thyroid hormones reported in the study, iodine intake appears adequate and there was essentially no iodine deficiency in the West Bank. Based on the Palestinian Family Health survey of 2010, 77% of households in Palestine consumed iodized salt: 68% in the West Bank and 91% in the Gaza Strip. The authors concluded that salt fortification has had a major and sustained benefit in improving the iodine status of Palestinian children.



Palestinian children receive sufficient iodine from a long-standing iodized salt program