

Health seminar: Importance of iodised salt stressed

Pakistan is among six countries where iodine deficiency rates are extremely high and the foremost responsibility to inform the public of the importance of iodised salt lies with healthcare providers.

This was stated by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection (TNCP) Executive Coordinator Nadeem Iqbal at a seminar on iodised salt consumption to prevent iodine deficiencies organised by TNCP in collaboration with Unicef and the Islamabad Capital Territory Administration's District Health Department on Wednesday at Tarlai. The seminar brought together staff of various basic health units, rural health centres and dispensaries, including doctors, medical assistants, lady health supervisors and workers.

“Previously, goiter was believed to be caused by iodine deficiency but now iodine deficiency is also being linked with mental impairment,” said Iqbal.

Addressing participants, he said healthcare providers should play a vital role in creating a demand for iodised salt among community members. TNCP has carried out a number of activities in rural areas of Islamabad and sensitised the local population, he added.

TNCP officials, during their presentation, said iodine deficiency was the most common, yet preventable, cause of mental handicap worldwide, adding iodine is either available in seafood or in iodised salt.

They said there is a misconception that iodine affects fertility among users, informing further that instead iodine deficiency causes complications among pregnant women.

It was further revealed that mild iodine deficiency can result in a significant loss in learning ability. Other effects include increased risk of stillbirth, miscarriage and goiter for women and learning difficulties for children.

In the question and answer session following the seminar, participants expressed their resolve to make iodised salt an essential ingredient in their food, especially for pregnant women.

Dr Fawad Khalid, a medical officer at the health department, said, “All we can do is focus on educating consumers so they demand iodised salt from retailers. The community's refusal to buy salt without iodine will give producers a commercial incentive to change”.