

## Case 12

### MEDICAL LEARNING



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There are a number of patients I see who have low sodium ( in common words salt) in their blood.They have a number of complaints like cramps, nausea vomiting, breathlessness, giddiness etc. In fact Sodium is the basic ion along with potassium and calcium for the basic functioning of each cell. Look at the blood tests of people a few hours before their death. A number of times you will see that they had low sodium.

You go through a number of medicine books. There will be an advice of low intake of salt for Hypertension, heart failure, and many such problems. The same advise has been repeatedly followed by the society blindly. End result, a number of hypertension and heart patients have low salt in their body. Besides, these patients are on drugs which throw out salt from their body. End result is that of catastrophic low sodium resulting in even the death of the patient.

In a warm climate like India, even if you don't see the sweat, we normally sweat about a litre of water. Have you tasted your sweat. It is salty, and if you sweat more you will lose more salt. We normally lose about 5 to 7 gms of salt daily. We need to replace this or else we face the complication of hyponatremia. The advice of low salt comes from Europe where people do not sweat because of cold climate. Here people end up in accumulating salt in their body.

Don't follow this commonest advice blindly. Regularly check the salt in your body when you go for a blood test. It is easily done. This will help you to determine how much salt you need to restrict. Most of the times it is not advisable to restrict salt and give them a tasteless food.