

Premature infants benefit from early sodium supplementation, according to new research

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Image: Wikimedia Commons

Early sodium supplementation for very premature infants can enhance weight gain according to a recent study by researchers at the University of Cincinnati Medical Center and Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

The results of the study, published today in the OnlineFirst version of the *Journal of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (JPEN)*, the research journal of the American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition (A.S.P.E.N.), examined 53 infants during the first months of life who had been born at less than 32 weeks of pregnancy.

Poor growth of [premature infants](#) can lead to negative neurodevelopmental outcomes. However, it is difficult to mimic natural growth rates for these infants. It is known that [sodium](#) is important to

promote growth but fortified human milk and commercial formulas often lack the recommended levels of sodium. And while some healthcare providers supplement nutrition with sodium, there is little evidence to prove the benefits of early sodium supplementation for premature infants.

This study found significant differences between the infants who received sodium supplementation and those who received the placebo. The infants receiving sodium gained weight at a faster rate, had lower rates of hyponatremia (a potentially life-threatening condition that occurs when the level of sodium in your blood is abnormally low), and no increase in common prematurity-related morbidities.

The researchers believe this study illustrates the benefits of achieving early sodium intake that is consistent with current recommendations in the most premature infants. They also recommend that more studies be conducted to ascertain the optimal dose and duration of sodium therapy and to confirm the relationship between supplemental sodium, postnatal growth, and complications of prematurity.

Provided by American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition

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