

Aussies need more iodine

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Health experts say a serious deficiency of iodine is emerging among people living in Australia's eastern states.

Food Standards Australia and New Zealand says iodine is the victim of modern diets that have seen a reduction in the use of table salt.

FSANZ spokeswoman Lydia Buchtman told the Australian Broadcasting Corp. that iodine deficiency can affect fine motor skills and, if serious, can cause thyroid problems and mental retardation.

FSANZ wants to replace the salt in basic foodstuffs such as bread, biscuits, cookies and breakfast cereals with iodized salt.

"This will not add to our overall salt intake but, at the same time, it will greatly improve the iodine status of the population," Buchtman said.

If Australia's state health ministers accept the proposal, mandatory addition of iodine to food could begin in 2008, she said.

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