



Bahrain is the first country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region to have eliminated iodine deficiency disorders. Bahrain was declared free of iodine deficiency disorders by the Ministry of Health of Bahrain in 2014.

Iodine deficiency disorders are a preventable global health problem that threaten around one fifth of the world's population. They cause mental retardation and other serious disorders that affect the brain's ability to receive and process data and children's ability to learn.

In 2012, the Bahraini Ministry of Health initiated a national study, in collaboration with the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD) and the Ministry of Education, to assess iodine levels in a national sample of students aged 6–12 years. The study used indicators adopted by WHO, UNICEF and the ICCIDD relating to concentration of iodine in urine, clinical examination of the thyroid, inflammation and consumption of iodine-rich foods.

Results showed that the mean concentration of iodine in urine was 245 micrograms per litre ($\mu\text{g/l}$). Only 1.75% of children were shown to have a low concentration of iodine (less than 100 $\mu\text{g/l}$), compared to 16.5% of children aged 8–12 in a study conducted in 2000. It was shown that a reduction in the rates of iodine deficiency was linked to higher consumption of iodized food. The study also found average rates of goiter at 2.1%.

H.E. Sadiq bin Abdul-Kareem Al-Shehabi, the Minister of Health of Bahrain, praised the achievement and said that it could not have been accomplished without the significant efforts of the Ministry of Health, with the technical support of WHO and the ICCIDD.

Related links

[Prevalence and risk factors of iodine deficiency among schoolchildren aged 6-12 years in Bahrain](#)

[International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders](#)

[Global targets 2025 to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition](#)

[Assessment of iodine deficiency disorders and monitoring their elimination: a guide for programme managers](#)

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