

Iodine deficiency dumbing down the nation

- Iodine deficiency can lop 15 points off IQ
- Study finds deficiency getting worse
- Iodised salt in bread a bid to address issue

A MINERAL deficiency which can dumb down a whole population is evident and possibly rising in Australia, latest research into iodine in newborns has shown.

Iodine deficiency can lop 10 to 15 points from an affected person's IQ, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) which also ranks Australia among about 50 countries known to have the deficiency.

A study which focused on almost all babies born in Victoria from 2001 to 2006, has again found clear signs of the deficiency and that it may have gotten worse.

About 26,000 of the 368,000 newborns, about seven per cent were found to have elevated concentrations of thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) caused by the body's compensatory response to a poor intake of iodine.

"Our analysis of neo-natal TSH concentrations, representing 95.5 per cent of Victorian children born during 2001 - 2006, indicates the Victorian population is iodine deficient," according to the study by Dr Ashequr Rahman, who is studying at Monash University, and research colleagues.

"... This result is consistent with three smaller Australian studies in Sydney, in NSW, which used newborn TSH data."

The New South Wales based studies found 5-8 per cent of newborns from 1998 to 2000 were iodine deficient.

The WHO considers a population to be iodine deficient if more than three per cent of neonatal blood samples show elevated TSH concentrations.

Looking at when Victoria's iodine deficient babies were born, they accounted for about four per cent of births in 2001 rising to more than nine per cent in 2006.

This was a "more than twofold increase over five years", the researchers warned, as part of a call for improved monitoring of iodine levels in newborns.

"We suggest that neonatal TSH concentrations in all states of Australia be analysed as soon as possible, and that this analysis should become a regular part of neonatal screening in Australia," Dr Rahman said.

The research is published in the latest edition of the Medical Journal of Australia.

Read more: <http://www.news.com.au/national/iodine-deficiency-dumbing-down-the-nation/story-e6frfkvr-1225945761396#ixzz1Ev2lOcvC>