

# TheNation

Friday, October 16, 2009

## Health experts caution against iodine deficiency

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD - Health professionals here on Thursday emphasised the need for Universal Salt Iodination (USI), as Pakistan is rated 6th amongst the countries where iodine deficiency is a serious public health problem.

They expressed these views in a symposium organized by The Network for Consumer Protection at Shifa College of Medicine.

"Iodine deficiency is the world's most prevalent yet easily preventable cause of brain damage having the most devastating impact on the brain of the developing fetus and young children in the first

few years of life" noted Dr Arif Azad, Executive Director of TheNetwork while speaking on the occasion.

"Globally, an estimated 20 million infants are born each year at risk of brain damage from iodine deficiency" he continued. According to UNICEF, 70 per cent of the total population in Pakistan is at risk of IDD. A recent research in Pakistan cited that around 50 million people are suffering from iodine deficiency, 6.5 million of whom are facing severe type of deficiency and the gravity is reflected in the striking figure of more than 4 million children born every year unprotected against brain damage.