



Get the scoop on Salt/Sodium

Diets higher in sodium are associated with an increased risk of developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure is known as the “silent killer” because its symptoms are not always obvious.

High blood pressure can raise the risk of heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, and blindness. It is one of the major risk factors for heart disease, the No. 1 killer worldwide.

What It Is

The words “salt” and “sodium” are often used interchangeably, but they do not mean the same thing. Salt (also known by its chemical name, sodium chloride) is a crystal-like compound that is abundant in nature. Sodium is a **mineral** and one of the **chemical elements found in salt**.

Where It Is Found

Sodium occurs naturally in nearly all foods, including fruits and vegetables though in very small amounts. Eating a variety of foods from all food groups will provide enough sodium for health and wellness. Unfortunately, for many people, more than 70% of the sodium we consume comes from **packaged, prepared** and restaurant foods. These foods have added salt and sodium-based ingredients, like preservatives, that increase the sodium. By having more processed and salty foods in your diet, you’re probably getting too much sodium.

Common foods that add the most sodium to the diet:

- ▶ Table salt
- ▶ Salt-based seasonings
- ▶ Sauces, ketchup

- ▶ Preserved and cured meats (e.g. sausages, canned meats, deli meats, salted fish and meats)
- ▶ Packaged soups
- ▶ Breads and rolls
- ▶ Snack foods (e.g. chips, crackers, microwave popcorn, and pretzels)
- ▶ Cheeses (includes processed cheese)

What It Does

- ▶ • Sodium is an essential nutrient that the human body needs in relatively small amounts. It is in rare circumstances that salt needs to be added to the diet.
- Sodium is important for many body processes, such as fluid balance, muscle contraction, and nervous system function.
- As a food ingredient, sodium has multiple uses, such as in curing meat, baking, thickening, retaining moisture, enhancing flavor (including the flavor of other ingredients), and as a preservative.

How much salt?

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends limiting sodium intake to <2 g (2000 mg/day sodium (5 g/day salt) for adults - that’s equal to about 1 teaspoon of table salt!

By limiting the amount of sodium in our diets we reduce our risk of high blood pressure and other illnesses.

Here are the approximate amounts of sodium in a given amount of salt:

- ▶ 1/4 teaspoon salt = 575 mg sodium

- ▶ 1/2 teaspoon salt = 1,150 mg sodium (**limit for persons with high blood pressure**)
- ▶ 3/4 teaspoon salt = 1,725 mg sodium
- ▶ 1 teaspoon salt = 2,300 mg sodium (**limit for adults**)

Action Steps for Reducing Sodium in your Diet

Food labels on packaged foods help us to know the amount of sodium we consume and is a useful tool for reducing how much sodium we eat.

The Daily Value for sodium is **less than 2,300 milligrams (mg) per day**.

How to Select Low-Sodium Foods and Beverages

It is easy to eat a low-sodium diet. First, it is best to consume unprocessed foods or foods that are prepared without any added salt or high sodium products.

| Nutrition Facts | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Serving Size 5 oz. (144g) | |
| Servings Per Container 4 | |
| Amount Per Serving | |
| Calories 310 | Calories from Fat 100 |
| % Daily Value* | |
| Sodium 560mg | 28% |
| Cholesterol 118g | 39% |
| Total Fat 15g | 21% |

When selecting packaged foods, compare the amounts of sodium and % DV and select those with low sodium. Foods and beverages with 5% DV or less of sodium per serving are considered low. Those with 20% DV or more of sodium per serving are considered high and should be avoided or consumed in small amounts.



Use these tips on how to cut back salt/sodium in your diet

- ▶ Read your nutrition labels to check the amount of sodium and choose foods that are:
 - ✓ “SODIUM-FREE”
 - ✓ “VERY LOW SODIUM/SALT”
 - ✓ “LOW SODIUM/SALT”
 - ✓ “SALT-FREE”
 - ✓ NO SALT ADDED
- ▶ Choose low sodium or no-salt-added nuts, seeds, and snack foods (such as chips and pretzels)—or have carrot or celery sticks instead.
- ▶ Many restaurants and especially fast food restaurants cook high sodium meals. Prepare your own food at home when you can.
- ▶ When eating out, ask that your meal be prepared without salt and request that sauces and salad dressings be served “on the side,” then use less of them. Ask if nutrition information is available and then choose options that are lower in sodium.
- ▶ Try to limit the use of mixes (packet-soup, sauces, pasta mixes, cake mix, flavoured rices, instant noodles and instant cereals etc.).
- ▶ Use fresh/“natural” seasonings, spices and herbs to flavor food when you are cooking or at the table instead of salt (thyme, scallion, paprika, lime juice, vanilla, onion, no salt spice blends, mustard, vinegar etc).
- ▶ Use fresh “natural” foods and avoid canned/ processed foods
- ▶ Choose fresh meats, poultry, and seafood, rather than processed varieties. Also, check the package on fresh meats and poultry to see if salt water or saline has been added.
- ▶ Many canned foods (tuna, sardines, vegetables, peas and beans) are packaged in “BRINE”. Rinse these foods under the tap to reduce the salt.
- ▶ Smoked, cured or processed meats chicken or fish are very high in sodium (pig’s tail, salted mackerel, salt fish, corned/smoked meat, deli slices, sausages, bacon etc.). Salted meats and fish should to be soaked overnight and boiled using fresh water to remove as much of the salt as possible.
- ▶ Sauces like soy sauce, ketchup and jerk sauce/seasoning have salt. Avoid using them too often or try reduced sodium sauces and vinegar and oil for salads.

Source:
US Food and Drug Administration. Interactive Nutrition Facts Label. March 2020

American Heart Association. Get the Scoop on Salt and Sodium.
<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sodium/sodium-and-salt>

World Health Organization Guidance Summary Sodium intake for adults and children
Guidance summary https://www.who.int/elena/titles/guidance_summaries/sodium_intake/en/

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