



Salt and Health



Eating too much salt can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure. Having high blood pressure is a major risk factor for both heart disease and stroke. By reducing your salt intake it is possible to reduce your blood pressure and your risk of developing heart disease and stroke, so it's well worth doing.

A lot of everyday foods are not obviously salty, but do contain high amounts of 'hidden salt'. It's easier to make healthier food choices if you are able to quickly check the salt content on food labels.

How Much?

The average salt intake is currently 8.6g salt a day (about 2 teaspoons), but we should be having much less than this - the recommended intake is just 6g a day for adults, less for children. Some of the salt we eat comes from:



- ◆ the salt we use in cooking
- ◆ salt we add at the table

Surprisingly, about 75% of the salt we eat is already added to the food we buy.

Most of this comes from the salt added to the everyday foods we buy and eat most often like meat products, ready meals, soup, pasta sauces, bread and some breakfast cereals.

Switching to a lower salt choice of a food, particularly if you eat it

regularly or in large portions, can make a big difference to your daily total. Reducing your intake of salty foods is an important part of a healthy diet.

Salt Sums

Salt is sodium chloride, and as food labels often list both salt and sodium content - it can be confusing.

To convert salt to sodium - divide by 2.5

To convert sodium to salt - multiply by 2.5

For example:

1g salt = 0.4g sodium

0.8g sodium = 2g salt

Let's Be Practical

Choose lower salt options using the following guidelines on food labels:

- ◆ high is more than 1.5g salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium),
- ◆ medium is between 0.3g (or 0.1g sodium) and 1.5g salt (0.6g sodium),

- ◆ low is 0.3g salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium).

For ready meals and sandwiches - try to choose meals with under 0.5g sodium per meal, that's 1.25g salt.

For individual foods - soups, sauces - try to choose foods with under 0.3g sodium per serving, that's 0.75g salt.

Be Salt Aware

- ◆ Use little or no salt in cooking and try not to add extra salt at table.
- ◆ Leave the salt shaker off the table.
- ◆ Cut right down on salty processed foods and ready meals and try and make your own if you can.
- ◆ Check out food labels for salt and go for lower salt choices. There can be a really big difference between different types and brands.
- ◆ Compare the salt levels on a few similar products and always try to choose those lower in salt.
- ◆ Ask in restaurants and take-aways for no salt.



The main foods containing salt are:

- ◆ salty meats and meat products such as ham, bacon, sausages, pate, salami
- ◆ canned, packet and instant soups
- ◆ ketchup, soy sauce, mayonnaise, pickles
- ◆ stock cubes, gravy powder and salted flavourings
- ◆ any canned food containing salt
- ◆ smoked meat and fish, prawns and anchovies
- ◆ meat and yeast extracts
- ◆ cheese
- ◆ salted snacks like crisps, salted nuts, salted biscuits, popcorn
- ◆ high salt ready meals, sauces and takeaway meals like pizza, Chinese, Indian
- ◆ pasta sauce
- ◆ sandwiches
- ◆ bread and breakfast cereals are an important part of a healthy diet but bread and some breakfast cereals contain salt - compare labels when you are shopping and choose the ones lower in salt

If you have high blood pressure, being active, keeping a healthy weight, not drinking too much alcohol and regular check-ups are also important.