



# Salt and Health

## The Problem

Eating too much salt can increase your risk of developing high blood pressure. High blood pressure is linked to heart disease and strokes. By reducing your salt intake it is possible to reduce your blood pressure and your risk of developing heart problems, so it's well worth doing.

A lot of 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 9.5g a day (about 2 teaspoons), we should be having much less than this - the recommended intake is just 6g a day.

Salt in our diet comes from salt used in cooking, salt added at the table and salt added to processed foods. Surprisingly, about 75% of the salt we eat is already added to the food we buy.

Reducing your intake of salty processed 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

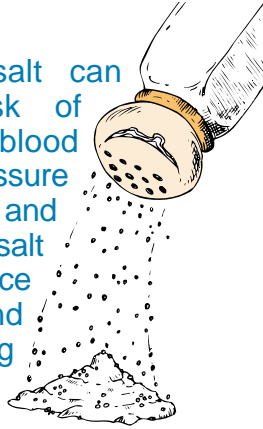
For example:

1g salt = 0.4g sodium

0.8g sodium = 2g salt

## So What Can You Eat?

- ✓ Fresh meat, fish, eggs, beans and lentils
- ✓ Fruit and vegetables - including fresh, frozen, tinned without salt and juices
- ✓ Cereals including rice, pasta, potatoes, bread, breakfast cereals and unsalted crackers
- ✓ Milk, yoghurt, soft white cheese [and small amounts of 'hard' cheese]
- ✓ Fresh herbs, spices, pepper, vinegar, mustard, tomato puree



## Let's Be Practical

Being realistic we all eat some processed or convenience foods most days. Choose lower salt options using the following guidelines:

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

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

### The main salty processed foods are:

- ◆ Salty meats such as ham, bacon, sausages, pate
- ◆ Tinned, packet and instant soups
- ◆ Soy sauce, stock cubes, gravy powder and salted flavourings
- ◆ Any tinned food containing salt
- ◆ Smoked meat and fish
- ◆ Meat and yeast extracts
- ◆ Hard cheese - [allowed 100g/4oz per week]
- ◆ Salted snacks like crisps, salted biscuits, popcorn
- ◆ High salt ready meals, sauces and take-away meals

Try to limit your intake of these salty foods to 1 serving a day.

## Be Salt Aware

Use a little salt in cooking.

Try not to add extra salt at table.

Cut right down on salty processed foods and ready meals.

Check out food labels for salt and go for lower salt choices.

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

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March 2004