

# Reducing Sodium in your Diet

Although sodium, or salt, has important roles in the body, most people consume far more than they need.

Reducing sodium intake can lower your blood pressure.

Most sodium from our diet comes from processed foods and eating out.

## Why is it important to watch my salt intake?

While sodium has many important functions in the body, such as maintaining water balance between tissues, the transmission of nerve impulses and the absorption and transport of some nutrients, when consumed in high amounts, it can lead to hypertension. This is especially important for people who are more sensitive to high blood pressure, including people over 45 years old, have diabetes or kidney disease, or who are of African descent.

The World Health Organization estimates hypertension as the leading risk factor for death. Although genetic and environmental factors play a role in predicting your health outcomes, your risk of developing hypertension can be reduced. Studies have shown that reducing dietary sodium intake decrease the number of hypertension cases among Canadians who have normal blood pressure. There is also evidence suggesting that a reduction in sodium intake by 1840 mg/day (approximately half of what the average Canadian is currently consuming) will lower diastolic BP by ~1 mmHg and systolic BP by 3 to 5 mmHg. This could potentially prevent 1 in 7 stroke deaths and 1 in 11 coronary. In addition, one million Canadians who have hypertension could revert back to normal blood pressure.

Aside from hypertension, people who consume high amounts of sodium are at risk for other health conditions such as severity and frequency of asthma, osteoporosis, stomach cancer, kidney stones, worsening of symptoms and signs of congestive heart failure.

## Types of salt

**Table salt** is 99% sodium chloride. It comes from rock salt or mineral deposits from salt mines and contains an anti-caking agent to keep it from clumping. It was first fortified with iodine to prevent iodine deficiency in the 1920s, to prevent people from developing a goiter. Today, iodine deficiency is rare but table salt is still iodized.

**Sea salt** is obtained by evaporating seawater. Unrefined sea salt contains 95-98% sodium chloride and 2-5% trace minerals but does not contain iodine.

**Kosher salt** is the same as table salt but contains no additives and is coarse. It is used to prepare Kosher foods (Jewish dietary regulations).

**Pickling salt** is used for brines to make pickled foods. It is fine-grained like table salt, but doesn't contain iodine or anti-caking ingredients, which would make the brine cloudy.

***\*\*There is no difference between the sodium content of these salts – they all contain about 2300 mg of sodium per teaspoon.***

## What is the prevalence of hypertension in Canada?

In Canada, approximately 46% of women and 38% of men aged 60 or over are taking antihypertensive drugs. However, many people are not aware of their elevated blood pressure and who are aware are either not treated or under-treated.

## How much salt is too much?

For an adult, the Adequate Intake (AI) for sodium is 1500 milligrams ( $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 tsp) each day, but British Columbians consume an average of 2700 – 3600 milligrams (mg) per day<sup>1</sup>. In 2004, it was estimated that among people aged 19-70, over 85% of men and 60% of women had sodium intakes greater than the upper level intake.

Table 2: Recommendations for adequate sodium intake by age

Age	Sodium Intake per Day (mg)
0 – 6 months	120
7 – 12 months	370
1 – 3 years	1,000
4 – 8 years	1,200
9 – 50 years	1,500
50 – 70 years	1,300
> 70 years	1,200

From Blood Pressure Canada – Sodium Policy

## Where does all this salt come from?

Believe it or not, the salt we add to our foods make up only about 11% of our daily sodium intake, and another 12% occurs naturally in the foods we eat. The majority (77%) of sodium in our diet comes from processed foods (prevent bacterial growth, decrease fermentation, texture and flavour) and dining out. Because most of the salt we eat is comes from processed foods, cutting down on our intake of them can drastically reduce the amount of sodium you eat. If you are taking medications, you should also be aware that many over-the-counter medications contain sodium. Check the label for sodium content.

## How about Sea Salt? Is it healthier?

Contrary to popular belief, sea salt is not healthier than regular salt. Salt is sodium chloride, no matter where it's from. However, sea salt does contain some minerals not present in ordinary table salt such as magnesium, sulfur, calcium, and potassium, but the amount of these trace minerals is practically undetectable and affects mainly taste and texture. Consumers who are eager to avoid the problems of salt overload should be aware that sea salt makes the same contribution to kidney problems as table salt.

## How can I cut back on sodium?

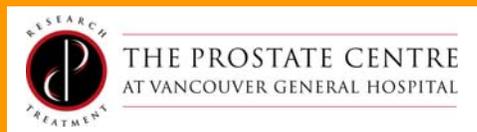
Here are some tips from Dietitians of Canada to help you cut back on your sodium intake

1. Avoid using salt at the table and as little as possible in your cooking.
2. Choose fresh foods more often than processed foods (eg. canned or packaged foods, processed, cured or smoked meats such sausage, ham, bacon, seafood, vegetable juices)
3. Read food labels. Sodium levels in foods can vary significantly between different brands. Some companies have 50-200 % more sodium in their food products compared to their competitors.
4. Enjoy the sodium reduced or "no salt added" alternatives. **Warning:** sodium reduced does not mean low in sodium – it just contains less salt than the regular product.
5. Limit salted snack foods such as chips, crackers, popcorn and nuts.
6. Reduce your intake of pickles, pickled foods, relishes, salsa, dips, sauerkraut and olives.
7. Use condiments in small quantities. Examples- ketchup, mustard, soy sauce, salad dressings, barbeque sauce.
8. Season foods with lemon or lime juice, vinegars, wine, fresh garlic, herbs and spices. Do not use spices that contain salt such as garlic salt or seasoning salt.
9. Eat out less often. Most restaurants serve foods that are high in sodium. Ask to see the nutrition information for the menu items and choose those with the lowest sodium content. Ask your server if menu items can be prepared without salt and that sauces and dressings be served on the side.
10. Salt substitutes, such as potassium or magnesium chloride, replace some or all of the sodium in salt. **Warning:** Potassium chloride is not recommended for people on a potassium-restricted diet
11. You can adapt to a less salty taste in your food by gradually decreasing the salt in your cooking and at the table.

Comparing the salt (sodium) content of some foods <sup>6</sup>:

	Food item	Serving	Sodium content (mg)
<b>Vegetables and Fruit</b>	<i>Tomato sauce, canned</i>	1 cup (260 g)	1357
	Tomato sauce, no salt added	1 cup (260 g)	28
	<i>Dill pickle</i>	1 medium pickle	833
	Cucumber, raw, sliced	½ cup (65 g)	1
	<i>Potato salad</i>	½ cup (132 g)	699
	Baked potato, plain	1 medium	17
	<i>Vegetable juice cocktail, canned</i>	1 cup (256 g)	690
	Orange juice	1 cup (256 g)	3
	Broccoli, cooked	½ cup (82 g)	34
	Spinach, raw	1 cup (32 g)	25
	Strawberries	½ cup (88 g)	1
	Banana	1 banana	1
<b>Grain Products</b>	<i>Bread crumbs, seasoned</i>	¼ cup (30 g)	535
	Bread crumbs, plain	¼ cup (30 g)	200
	<i>Croissant</i>	1 medium	424
	Bread, whole wheat	1 slice	179
	<i>Saltine crackers, regular</i>	5 crackers (15 g)	166
	Saltine crackers, unsalted tops	5 crackers (15 g)	115
	Saltine crackers, low salt	5 crackers (15 g)	96
Brown rice, cooked	½ cup (103 g)	1	
<b>Milk and Alternatives</b>	<i>Cottage cheese, 1%, regular</i>	½ cup (125 ml)	500
	Cottage cheese, 1%, no salt	½ cup (125 ml)	16
	<i>Cheddar cheese, regular</i>	1.5 oz (50 g)	311
	Cheddar cheese, low sodium	1.5 oz (50 g)	11
<b>Meat and Alternatives</b>	<i>Cheeseburger (fast food), single patty</i>	1 burger	1589
	Chicken breast, roasted	3.5 oz (85 g)	64
	<i>Baked beans, with beef, canned</i>	1 cup (270 g)	1335
	Baked beans, canned, no salt added	1 cup (270 g)	3
	<i>Delicatessen ham, sliced</i>	3 oz (85 g)	1112
	Turkey breast, roasted	3 oz (85 g)	44
	<i>Almonds, roasted, salt added</i>	¼ cup (35 g)	249
	Almonds, roasted, no salt added	¼ cup (35 g)	0
Salmon, baked or broiled	3.5 oz (100 g)	0	
<b>Other foods, snacks, condiments, etc.</b>	<i>Table salt</i>	1 tsp (6 g)	2373
	<i>Vegetable soup, canned</i>	1 cup (255 g)	1068
	Vegetable soup, low sodium	1 cup (255 g)	139
	<i>Soy sauce</i>	1 tbsp (15 ml)	1044
	Mrs Dash ® salt substitute	¼ tsp (0.6 g)	0
	<i>Pretzels, salted</i>	10 pretzels	1029
	Pretzels, unsalted	10 pretzels	173

The Prostate Education & Research Centre



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Visit The Prostate Centre on the World Wide Web:

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