



## Sodium

Sodium is an element found in table salt but did you know that it also occurs naturally in many of the foods in our diets? Most of our sodium intake comes from the “pinch here” or “dash there” that we add to our foods as well as what manufacturers add during processing.

Salt is added for a variety of reasons such as adding flavor, preservation or changing the texture or structure of a particular food.

### Daily Sodium Intake as recommended by the Institute of Medicine:

1000 mg for children aged 1 to 3  
1200 mg for children aged 4 to 8  
1500 mg for people aged 9 to 50  
1300 mg for adults aged 51 to 70  
1200 mg for seniors over 70 years of age

If you're like most people, you are getting far more sodium than your daily requirement. A 2004 study done by statistics Canada indicates that among people aged 19 to 70, over 85% of men and 60% of women had sodium intakes exceeding the recommended upper limit, which increases health risks. Consider that just one teaspoon of table salt has 2325 milligrams of sodium.

Sodium is an essential nutrient but while the body needs some sodium to function, too much may lead to high blood pressure, a major risk factor for stroke, heart disease and kidney disease. Your body uses sodium to maintain the right balance of fluids in your body, helps transmit nerve impulses and influences the contraction and relaxation of muscles.

Taste alone may not tell you which foods are high in sodium, e.g. a typical bagel may not taste salty but it has about 532mg of sodium?

### Know Your Labels

Food labels are required to list the amount of sodium contained in each serving as well as if the ingredients include salt or sodium compounds such as Monosodium Glutamate (MSG), Baking Soda, Baking Powder, Disodium Phosphate, Sodium Alginate and Sodium Nitrate or Nitrite.

Watch for foods labeled “Sodium Reduced” as these may still contain a lot of salt, e.g. regular canned chicken noodle soup contains about 1100mg of sodium per cup so a product with 25% less sodium still has a whopping 820mg of sodium per cup.

A good “rule of thumb” is to avoid products with more than 200mg of sodium per serving but remember to check the Nutrition Facts Label for the serving size (consider how many servings you actually eat).

### Reduction Strategies:

- ✓ Choose foods that are lower in sodium
- ✓ Eat more fresh, unprocessed foods rather than pre-packaged, convenience foods
- ✓ Choose more fruits and vegetables which are low in sodium
- ✓ Resist adding salt to your food; use other herbs or spices
- ✓ Prepare foods with little or no added salt

### Resources:

[statcan.gc.ca](http://statcan.gc.ca)  
[healthycanadians.gc.ca](http://healthycanadians.gc.ca)

### Fun Food Facts!



Salt, our oldest preservative was extremely rare in the past. So rare, in fact, that it was often used as pay. Could you imagine earning a couple of tablespoons of salt for a hard-days work?

### Did You Know?



Your taste for salt is acquired. By decreasing your use of salt gradually, your taste buds will adjust. After a few weeks of cutting back you may not miss the salt and some foods may even taste “too salty”. As you use less salt, your preference for it diminishes allowing you to enjoy the taste of the food itself.