

The Skinny on Salt

Evidence shows that the typical diet throughout the developed nations of the world contains too much sodium (salt). People with high blood pressure may have some form of increased sensitivity to salt, meaning that the same amount of salt that a “nonsensitive” person would eat raises a “sensitive” person’s blood pressure to a greater extent.

Although blood pressure does not always fall when salt is restricted, some people with mild high blood pressure can actually lower their blood pressure by reducing sodium in their diet. This means avoiding salty foods and cutting down on salt in cooking and at the table.

Salt occurs naturally in meat, seafood, poultry, dairy products, grain products, fruits and vegetables. If your diet includes all of these foods, you are getting plenty of sodium to meet your body’s needs.

According to the American Heart Association, healthy American adults should reduce their sodium intake to no more than 2,300 mgs. Per day, which equals about one teaspoon of sodium chloride (salt). The average American consumes 5,000 mgs per day! The majority of sodium consumed is typically from salty snacks, fast-food and processed food.

Sodium Equivalents in the Diet

1/4 teaspoon salt
600 mg sodium

1/2 teaspoon salt
1200 mg sodium

3/4 teaspoon salt
1800 mg sodium

1 teaspoon salt
2400 mg sodium

1 teaspoon baking soda
1000 mg sodium

How to Spot “Hidden Salt”

Processed foods such as canned vegetables, soups, frozen dinners, sauces mixes and many other instant products typically have added salt, Salted snacks including chips,

popcorn, nuts and pretzels also have significant amounts of sodium. The Nutrition Facts label on packaged food tells you how much sodium is in each serving. It also lists whether salt or sodium-containing compounds are ingredients. Here is a tip: If sodium is one of the first three ingredients listed, the product is high in sodium.

Sodium-related terms on food labels

Sodium-free or salt free

Each serving contains less than 5 mg of sodium

Very low sodium

Each serving contains 35 mg of sodium or less

low sodium

Each serving contains 140 mg or sodium or less

Reduced or less sodium

The product contains at least 25 percent less sodium than the regular version

Light in sodium

The sodium content has been reduced by at least 50 percent from the regular version

Unsalted or no salt added

No salt is added during processing of a food that normally contains salt.
However, some foods with these labels may still be high in sodium.