



1 What's the Fault With Salt?

Your doctor has recommended that you eat less salt. But what's wrong with salt?

Your body needs salt... in small amounts

Salt (sodium) isn't all bad for you. Your body needs sodium in small amounts for fluid balance, muscle strength and nerve function.

Salt Overload

When you eat too much salt:²

How Much Salt Do I Need?

The average American eats **3,600 milligrams (mg)** of sodium daily. You need at most **2,300 mg** of salt a day—that's just about **one teaspoon** of salt.²

- Your body will try to flush out the extra sodium.
- If your body can't get rid of enough sodium, the sodium builds up in your blood. Your body responds by holding onto more fluid.
- That extra fluid increases your total blood volume.
- The added blood pushes harder against your blood vessel walls, causing your blood pressure to rise.
- Your heart has to work harder to pump all that extra blood. This can cause serious health problems over time.

You may need less salt.

Some people should get only **1,500 mg** of salt (about **2/3 teaspoon**) a day:³

- People with **high blood pressure**
- People with **diabetes** or **chronic kidney disease**
- People **51 years of age** and older
- **African Americans**

2 What's the Source of Salt in My Diet?

The salt in your diet comes from:²

- **77%** – Processed and packaged foods
- **12%** – Natural sources
- **6%** – Added at the table while eating
- **5%** – Added while cooking

Salt also lurks in places where you'd least expect it, including:⁴

- **Natural foods** – Milk and other dairy products, meat, and shellfish
- **Baking powder and baking soda** – 1 tsp of baking soda has 1,000 mg of sodium
- **Condiments** – Soy sauce, ketchup, mustard, and others can be high in salt
- **Some "reduced" or "light" sodium products** – May still contain high amounts of salt if the standard product started out high. Read the food label. Avoid foods with 200 mg of sodium or more per serving

3 Tips to Cut the Salt

If you want to trim salt from your diet, **the best way to start is to cut down on processed and prepared foods**, such as lunch meat, hot dogs and fast food. Other things you can do are:

- Read the Food Label to choose lower sodium foods.
- Eat more fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Prepare foods without adding more salt.
- Replace the salt shaker with a salt-free seasoning.
- When dining out, ask how the food is prepared. Ask for your meal to be prepared without salt or with less salt.



4 Why a DASH Could Do Your Body Good

DASH stands for:⁵

- **Dietary**
- **Approaches to**
- **Stop**
- **Hypertension**



- The DASH diet is based on research that linked changes in diet to lower blood pressure.
- The DASH plan is low in salt, fat and cholesterol—which can raise blood pressure. It's high in minerals, protein and fiber—which can help lower blood pressure.
- People who stick with the program can lose weight and help lower their blood pressure by several points over time.

Reading the Food Label

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1/2 cup (130g)	
Servings Per Container 3 1/2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 25	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 10mg	1%
Potassium 270mg	6%
Total Carbohydrate 5g	2%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugar 3g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 5%	Vitamin C 30%
Calcium 4%	Iron 4%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a diet of 2,000 calories.	

Read and compare the food labels of the items you buy to help you Get to Goal and keep your daily sodium intake under your limit.

- Look at the serving size. The amount of sodium listed is for one serving only.
- Look at the amount of sodium in milligrams. Keep in mind your daily sodium limits.
- Try to find items with no higher than 5% of your daily sodium value. More than 20% is considered high sodium.
- Look for foods that are labeled "low sodium," "sodium-free" or "no salt added."

Source: Your Guide to Lowering Your Blood Pressure with Diet. Available at: <http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hsd/dash/>. Accessed February 7, 2011.