

Sodium

and

You



Salt and High Blood Pressure

Healthy salt levels

We all need some salt, also known as sodium, to keep our bodies working. But how much salt is healthy? Research finds that 1,500 mg (or about 2/3 tsp) of salt each day is healthy for people who:

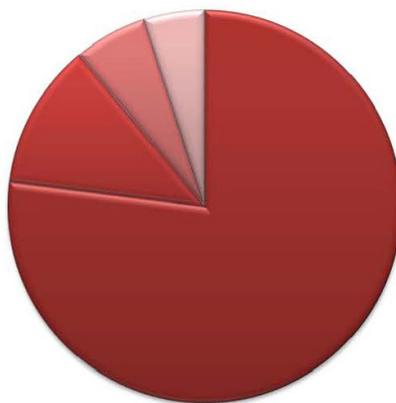
- have high blood pressure
- are middle-aged or older
- are black

For everyone else, 2,300 mg of salt each day or less is healthy.

Where our salt comes from

Most of the salt we eat is from processed/prepared foods and restaurant foods. Only a small amount of salt comes from cooking or adding salt at the table. The salt we eat comes from:

- 77% processed and prepared foods (such as restaurant foods, frozen meals, and food out of a box such as cereal, chips, sauces, crackers, etc.)
- 12% naturally found in food
- 6% added while eating (from the salt shaker)
- 5% added while cooking



- Processed and prepared foods
- Naturally found in food
- Salt Shaker
- Cooking

Salt and High Blood Pressure

Too much salt raises blood pressure. High blood pressure puts you at risk for heart disease, kidney disease, and stroke. Heart disease and stroke are the first and third leading causes of death.

Everyone is at risk for high blood pressure. Exercise and a good diet low in salt, fats, and sugar can lower your risk of high blood pressure.

Eating less salt and lowering your blood pressure can also prevent high blood pressure later in life, even if you don't have high blood pressure now.

If you don't know your blood pressure, see your doctor to have it checked.

Salt and eating out

Salt information is not easy to find for restaurant foods. It's hard to guess how much salt restaurant foods have. Some restaurants can tell you the amount of salt in their foods if you ask. Others might post it on their websites. Remember to look for salt facts or ask for low sodium options before buying your meal.

Tips for eating less salt

You can eat less salt by following these ideas:

- Cook without added salt, or with only small amounts.
- Cook foods with salt-free spices. Some examples of these include:
 - Basil
 - Bay leaves
 - Caraway seeds
 - Curry
 - Garlic
 - Ginger
 - Lemon
 - Mint
 - Oregano
 - Parsley
 - Pepper
 - Rosemary
 - Sesame
 - Thyme
- Add little or no salt at the table.
- Choose foods that are lower in salt. Cut back on frozen dinners, pizza, packaged mixes, canned soups or broths, and salad dressings, as these often have a lot of salt.
- Buy fresh, plain frozen, or canned with "no salt added" vegetables.
- Use fresh poultry, fish, and lean meat rather than canned or processed types.
- Cook rice, pasta, and hot cereals without salt. Cut back on instant or flavored rice, pasta, and cereal mixes, which usually have added salt.
- Rinse canned foods, such as tuna, to remove some salt.
- When available, buy foods labeled as low or reduced-sodium or "no salt added" versions of food.
- Drink water instead of soda.

For resources for this fact sheet or more information go to www.hearthishighway.org.

Another great site for information is www.checkyourhealth.org or call Check Your Health at 1-888-222-2542.