

Sodium: The Facts

Is it sodium or salt?

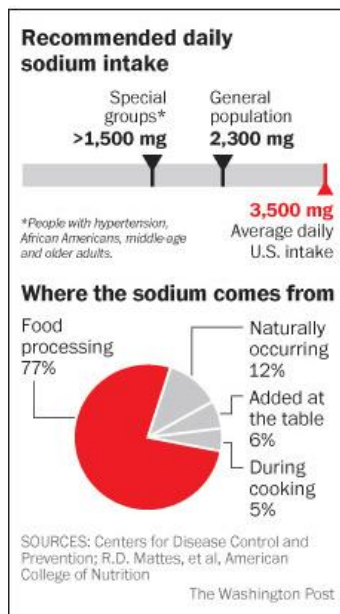
- The words sodium and salt are not exactly the same, but they are often used interchangeably.
- Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt. Table salt is 40 percent sodium and 60 percent chloride.
- One level teaspoon of salt is approximately 2,300 mg of sodium.

What are the dietary recommendations for sodium?

- For healthy adults, the recommendation is no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day from all sources.³
- The recommendation is no more than 1,500 mg of sodium a day if you have high blood pressure, kidney disease or diabetes; you are black; or you are middle-aged or older.³
- The recommendations include sodium in processed or prepared foods, added during cooking, and added at the table.

What are the sources of sodium?

Most of the sodium consumed is from processed and restaurant foods. Only a small amount is added during cooking or while eating.



Why are we concerned about sodium?

- High sodium intake can raise blood pressure, which is a leading risk factor for heart disease and stroke.¹
- The average daily sodium intake for Americans aged 2 years and older is more than 3,400 mg,² higher than the dietary recommendation for healthy adults.
- Approximately 70% of adults should adhere to the lower sodium recommendation.²

Why is it important to decrease sodium intake?

- Decreasing sodium intake can help those with high blood pressure to get and keep their blood pressure under control
- Because most sodium consumed is from processed and restaurant foods, people trying to eat less sodium tend to consume more than they mean to.

Why decrease sodium through policy?

- Working through policy change can help lower the amount of sodium in the food supply giving consumers more healthful foods to choose from.

What sodium reduction policy efforts are underway?

- MDH along with its partners, are working to increase the nutritional value of foods purchased for school lunches, focusing on reduced sodium and saturated fat, and increased whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Minnesota, along with many other states, is participating in the National Salt Reduction Initiative led by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

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What can individuals do to decrease sodium in their diets?

- If a recipe calls for salt, use half the amount.
- Use other spices and herbs to add flavor.
- Taste food before adding salt.
- Use no-salt spice shakers such as Mrs. Dash.
- Look for prepared foods that are low in sodium.
- Make your own frozen dinners.
- Choose fresh or plain frozen vegetables. These are lower in sodium than canned vegetables.
- Read the Nutrition Facts label to choose foods with the lowest mg of sodium. The best choice is foods with less than 200 mg of sodium in one serving.

What other resources are available?

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/salt>
- New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene:
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/cardio/cardio-salt-coalition.shtml>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture:
www.usda.gov and search “information sodium”

¹ CDC DHDSP. Sodium Q&A Fact Sheet May 2010.
Online at:

http://www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/Sodium_QandA.pdf

² CDC DHDSP. Sodium Fact Sheet April 2010. Online at:

http://www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/Sodium_Fact_Sheet.pdf

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005, 6th edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office; 2005 Jan.