

It's never too late to reduce your salt intake / CASH.

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It's never too late to reduce
your salt intake



Salt and your health

A small amount of salt is essential to our wellbeing. Adults need about 1.4 grams and this can easily be obtained from eating a balanced diet. However, most adults now eat between 7 to 10 grams/day, far more than needed. Cutting our salt intake is vital as too much salt has several bad effects on our health. **Adults should eat no more than 6g of salt a day.**

Blood pressure

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. In England, a third of people have high blood pressure (hypertension). People with high blood pressure are three times more likely to develop heart disease or have a stroke. Strokes and heart attacks are the most common cause of death and disability in the UK. Eating less salt can have an immediate effect on lowering blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke.

Reducing your salt intake by around 2.5g a day reduces your risk of a stroke or heart attack by a quarter.

The importance of reducing salt as we get older

As we get older the risk of having a stroke or heart attack increases. Lowering blood pressure will help to prevent strokes and heart attacks, especially in older people. It is, therefore, important to keep high blood pressure under control with drugs and lifestyle measures, in particular a reduction in salt intake.

Everyone can benefit from a reduction in blood pressure as the higher your blood pressure, the higher your risk of suffering a stroke or heart attack, even if you have not been diagnosed with high blood pressure.

In all developed countries there is a rise in blood pressure with age. This rise is not seen in those with little or no salt in their diet. The rise in blood pressure with age is largely dependent on the amount of salt in the diet and the higher the salt intake, the higher the rise in blood pressure with age. Reducing your salt intake can reduce the rise in blood pressure as you get older.

As we become older, we also become more sensitive to the effects of salt.

Therefore, a reduction in salt is especially beneficial for older people, even if their blood pressure is in the normal range. This small change in lifestyle will result in an immediate fall in blood pressure and **a reduction in the risk of developing a stroke or heart attack.**

Bone demineralisation and osteoporosis

A high salt intake causes calcium loss from bones leading to thinning of the bones. Thin bones are more fragile and as we get older this results in more bone fractures which take longer to heal.

Stomach cancer

Comparison of different countries around the world shows a close relationship between the amount of salt eaten in the diet and the number of people who develop stomach cancer.

Simple ways to lower your salt intake

Surprisingly, three quarters of the salt we eat is hidden in processed foods and only a quarter comes from salt added either at the table or during cooking. Some foods that we eat every day are not necessarily high in salt, but because we eat plenty of them they contribute a lot to our daily salt intake.

Foods that are often high in salt - cut down on these foods

Anchovies	Noodle snacks/pots	Sausages and sausage rolls
Bacon	Olives	Smoked meat and fish
Cheese	Pickles	Soy sauce
Chips (if salt added)	Prawns	Stock cubes and bouillon
Coated chicken e.g. kiev	Salami	Table sauces
Gravy granules	Salted and dry roasted nuts	Tinned meat
Ham	Salt fish	Yeast extract e.g. marmite

Foods where some brands are high in salt - check the label

Baked beans	Meat pies	Sandwiches
Biscuits	Pasta sauces	Steamed puddings
Breakfast cereals	Pizza	Tinned fish
Bread and bread products*	Pork pie	Tinned meals
Cakes and pastries	Pre-prepared meat joints	Tinned meat
Cooking sauces	Ready meals	Tinned pasta
Crisps	Soup	Tomato Ketchup

*bread provides a fifth of our salt intake

Foods which are lower in salt - eat more of these

Breakfast cereals** e.g. Shredded Wheat	Fruit and Vegetables (dried, fresh, frozen and tinned)***	Plain cottage cheese
Couscous	Homemade bread**	Plain popcorn
Eggs	Homemade sauces**	Porridge oats
Emmental	Homemade soup**	Pulses (peas, beans, lentils)***
Fresh fish	Mozzarella	Ricotta
Fresh meat and poultry	Pasta and Rice	Seeds
Fromage frais	Plain cheese spreads	Unsalted nuts
		Yogurt

** with no added salt ***choose tinned products with no added salt

Other simple reductions

- Don't add salt at the table or during cooking. Sea salt and rock salt should also be avoided as these are just as high in salt
- Other high salt flavour enhancers include stock cubes, gravy browning, soy sauce. Choose lower salt versions.
- Use fresh, frozen or dried herbs, spices, chilli, garlic, pepper, vinegar, lemon or lime juice to add flavour instead
- Avoid ketchup, soy sauce, mustard, pickles and mayonnaise – these can all be high in salt
- Food eaten outside the home (food bought in takeaways, workplace canteens, service stations, cafes and restaurants) is often high in salt. Check labels or ask for a lower salt option.

Many processed foods are high in salt so try to cut down on these and switch to more fresh foods such as fish, chicken, meat, fruit and vegetables or check the label and choose a lower salt option.

Give yourself time to adjust to eating less salt

The salty taste of foods depends on the salt content of the food and also the sensitivity of the salt receptors in your mouth. Initially when you reduce your salt intake foods tend to taste bland, but

after two or three weeks your taste receptors become more sensitive, getting the same effect from lower levels of salt and you will start to taste the real delicious flavour of natural food.

Calculating salt from sodium

Some foods are labelled with the sodium content per 100g. To convert sodium to salt multiply by 2.5.

**1g or 1000mg of sodium per 100g =
2.5g of salt per 100g**

Remember to think about how much of the food you will be eating. Look at the size of the packet and use this as a guide – is this more or less than 100g? From this you can work out the salt content of the portion you will eat.

Recommended maximum salt intakes

Age	Maximum Salt Intake
0 - 6 months	< 1g / day
6 - 12 months	1g / day
1 - 3 years	2g / day
4 - 6 years	3g / day
7 - 10 years	5g / day
11 years and above	6g / day

For further information on salt, cutting down your salt intake and for low salt sandwich fillings and recipes please see our website

www.actiononsalt.org.uk



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