

The Salty Truth

Sodium (Na) is a chemical element found in table salt (sodium chloride). The human body uses it for many things; it regulates bodily fluids and blood pressure, and also keeps muscles and nerves functioning properly. You would think that the majority of sodium consumed by Canadians comes from salt added at the table and in cooking, but in reality, most of it comes from prepackaged, ready-to-eat foods. Most Canadians consume much more sodium per day (approximately 3029mg daily) than they need to maintain good health.

1 teaspoon = approx. 6g of salt = approx. 2400mg of sodium

Excess amounts

Diets high in sodium are associated with an increased risk of **high blood pressure**. High blood pressure (also medically referred to as hypertension) may increase your risk for stroke, heart disease, kidney disease and blindness. Studies show that blood pressure may be lowered by consuming less sodium.

Foods high in sodium

As mentioned earlier, most of the sodium consumed by Canadians comes in the form of prepackaged, ready-to-eat foods. Some foods that can be high in sodium include:

- Sandwiches, burgers and fast foods
- Soups
- Pizza
- Frozen, ready-to-eat meals
- Cheese
- Gravies and sauces
- Processed luncheon meats
- Snack foods (such as crackers, nachos, potato chips and pretzels)

Tricks to decreasing your intake

- Prepare your foods with little or no added salt
- On a nutritional label, check the percentage of the Daily Value of sodium (%DV is found on the far right side of the label). The %DV can tell you at a glance if there is a lot or a little sodium in that specific food.
 - Aim for foods that are less than 5% of the DV of sodium. Foods with 20% or more DV of sodium are considered high
 - Look at this value when comparing different products
- Choose salt-free, low- or reduced-sodium, or no-salt-added versions of foods and condiments.
 - "salt-free": less than 5mg of sodium per serving
 - "low-sodium": 140mg of sodium or less per serving
 - "reduced-sodium": at least 25% less sodium than the regular product
- Use spices instead of salt.
 - Flavour foods with herbs, spices, lemon, lime, vinegar, or salt-free seasoning blends
- Choose fresher, unprocessed foods more often than prepackaged foods.
 - Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meat instead of canned, smoked or processed types

- When eating out, ask for dressings and sauces on the side and use them sparingly.
 - Before ordering at a restaurant, ask or look online for the nutritional information to see how much sodium is in the foods on their menu.

Compare:

Product	Sodium (mg)	Compared to...	Sodium (mg)
Peanuts, unsalted 1/3 cup	0-5	Peanuts, salted 1/3 cup	120
Beans, cooked from dried or frozen, no salt 1/2 cup	0-5	Beans, canned 1/2 cup	400
Natural Cheese 1 1/2 oz.	110-450	Process Cheese 2 oz.	600
Tuna, canned, water pack, no salt added, 3 oz.	35-45	Tuna, canned, water pack 3 oz.	230-350
Vegetables, fresh or frozen, cooked without salt, 1/2 cup	1-70	Canned or frozen with sauce 1/2 cup	140-460

DIFFERENT PEOPLE REQUIRE DIFFERENT AMOUNTS OF SODIUM PER DAY. CONSULT WITH YOUR DOCTOR TO FIND OUT WHAT AMOUNT IS RIGHT FOR YOU!

References

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/sodium-eng.php>

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/hbp/dash/new_dash.pdf

