

SHAKE DOWN ON SODIUM

Sodium is an important mineral to the body. It helps keep body fluids in balance; helps the body to absorb certain nutrients; and also aids in muscle performance and sending nerve messages. Excessive sodium in the diet is linked with high blood pressure or hypertension. Hypertension can result in heart disease, kidney failure or stroke.

The connection between salt and high blood pressure is complicated, but moderate use during childhood does not appear to put children at risk.









Sodium and salt are mistakenly thought to be the same ingredient. Actually, sodium is a mineral while salt is a naturally-occurring chemical compound made up of 40 percent sodium and 60 percent chloride. Salt is the major source of sodium in the diet.



THIS OUT!

- ✓ The body needs less than 500 milligrams of sodium—or less than $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt—per day.
- ✓ The average American consumes more than five times the amount of sodium they need.
- ✓ The National Research Council recommends a maximum daily intake of 2,400 milligrams sodium—or about 1 teaspoon of salt.

WHEN YOU COOK

-  **Plan** meals that contain less sodium.
-  **Balance** low and high-sodium choices.
-  **Gradually reduce** salt in favorite recipes. Most can be reduced by half or less.
-  **Look** for low-sodium recipes. There are a variety of good cookbooks that feature low-sodium choices.
-  **Cut out or cut back** on salt in cooking water.
-  **Look** for condiments and sauces with less sodium.
-  **Learn** to use spices and herbs for added flavor.
-  **Rinse** canned vegetables and cook in tap water.

AT THE TABLE

- Taste food before you salt.
- Use one shake instead of two. Salt is an acquired taste. Your taste buds will adjust to less and less salt.
- Beware of added sauces and condiments. These are usually very high in sodium.
- Try no-salt spice mixes.

WHEN EATING OUT

- Choose food without sauce or ask for the sauce on-the-side.
- Ask for food served without added salt.

- Balance low and high-sodium choices.
- Avoid soup and Oriental foods, which are traditionally high in salt.
- Beware of fast-food; it is often very high in sodium.

WHERE IS THE SODIUM?

➡ Processed Food

$\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the sodium in the diet is added during the processing of foods. Sodium is added for seasoning, leavening and preservation.

➡ Table Salt

About a third of the sodium in the diet is added in the form of salt during food preparation or at the table.

➡ Natural Content

Most foods in their natural state contain some sodium; however, most unprocessed, unseasoned food is generally low in sodium. Only about 10 percent of the sodium in the average American diet occurs naturally in foods.

READ FOOD LABELS

- ✓ Check for added sodium on food labels. Key words or symbols include salt, sodium, soda, Na⁺, NaCl, MSG and brine.
- ✓ When shopping, look for specific claims such as *low in sodium* or *reduced sodium*.
- ✓ Choose fresh foods over processed foods. Generally there is more sodium in canned vegetables and fruits than in frozen. And more sodium in frozen than in fresh. *Fresh is best* when avoiding added sodium.

✓ Sodium, usually in the form of salt, is added to most processed or prepared convenience foods such as soup, salad dressing, canned or dry dinner mixes, sauces and condiments, dessert mixes, canned vegetables, frozen entrees and processed meats.

✓ Pickled foods, packed in vinegar and/or brine, are exceptionally high in sodium.

✓ Some varieties of cookies, ready-to-eat cereals, cheese and colas contain some sodium.

✓ Sodium occurs naturally in drinking water, with softened water containing more.

✓ Medication can be a source of hidden sodium. Check with your doctor or pharmacist concerning the use of antacids, seltzers, laxatives, aspirin and other non-prescription drugs.

References

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