



Boston Public Health Commission

Salt and Heart Health: Get the Facts

Your body needs sodium. But eating too much can cause detrimental diseases like hypertension, heart attack and stroke. More than 75% of the sodium Americans eat comes from restaurants, prepackaged, and processed foods. Use this tip sheet to help you spot the salt in your meals.

We Need Sodium... But not too much

Sodium, believe it or not, does play a vital role in our bodies. It is needed for signal transmission along the nerves, muscle contraction (our muscles need sodium for contraction and relaxation), regulating the water balance in the body and of course for maintaining blood pressure.

However, we only need it in **small amounts**. Most American adults (and children, too) are eating too much sodium. In fact, we are eating about 3,400 mg of sodium a day, when most of us should have less than 2,300mg (about 1 teaspoon of salt) per day.



Common Sources of Sodium

High-sodium foods don't always taste salty!

- Cold Cuts and Cured Meats
- Breads and Rolls
- Frozen Meals
- Cereals
- Canned Vegetables

Shake the Habit

- Avoid processed, prepared and pre-packaged foods
- Rinse canned vegetables or beans
- Choose lower-sodium foods or low-sodium versions of your favorites.
- Read Food Labels
- Use fruit and raw vegetables as snacks.
- Select unsalted nuts or seeds, dried beans, peas and lentils.
- Select unsalted or low-sodium fat-free broths, bouillons or soups.
- Don't use salt during cooking. Use SPICES and HERBS!

Salt vs. Sodium

The terms salt and sodium are often used interchangeably, however they are not exactly the same.

- Salt**: Is comprised of about 40% of sodium.
- Sodium** is measured in **milligrams-mg**
- Salt** is measure in **teaspoons**.
- Too much **sodium** can cause **high blood pressure** — a known contributor to cardiovascular disease and stroke

Remember this conversion: **1/4 teaspoon of salt equals 600mg of sodium**

Low Sodium Choice	High Sodium Choice
Nutrition Facts Serving Size (120g) Amount Per Serving Calories 280 Calories from Fat: 35 % Daily Values* Total Fat 4g 8% Saturated Fat 2g 10% Trans Fat 0g Cholesterol 10mg 3% Sodium 430mg 18% Total Carbohydrate 47g 16% Dietary Fiber 2g 8% Sugars 5g Protein 11g 22% <small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small>	Nutrition Facts Serving Size (120g) Amount Per Serving Calories 320 Calories from Fat: 90 % Daily Values* Total Fat 15g 23% Saturated Fat 5g 25% Trans Fat 0g Cholesterol 15mg 5% Sodium 900mg 38% Total Carbohydrate 45g 15% Dietary Fiber 1g 4% Sugars 3g Protein 12g 24% <small>*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.</small>

VS.