

Healthy Measures: The scoop on sodium

Although sodium is found naturally in many foods, it's the added salt you need to watch out for. Almost 80% of the sodium we eat comes from processed foods, including fast foods, processed meats such as hot dogs, bacon and luncheon meats, canned soups, dressings, packaged sauces, condiments such as ketchup, soy sauce and pickles, and salty snacks like potato chips, nuts and crackers.

Adults should consume no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day (about 1 teaspoon of table salt). On average, Canadians consume about 3,400 milligrams of sodium a day.

A diet high in sodium is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke, heart disease and kidney disease. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, approximately six million Canadians have high blood pressure.

There is a place for salt in a healthy eating plan. Our bodies do require a small amount of sodium for healthy functioning, such as maintaining a fluid balance and nerve function. Because our diets are generally so high in salt, everybody – even those with normal blood pressure – can benefit from reducing their salt intake.

Tips to cut back on sodium:

- **Look at the food label.** Look at the % Daily Value which tells you if a food item has a lot or a little of a nutrient. Aim for a product with a % Daily Value for sodium of 5% or less per serving
- **Read the ingredient list.** Watch for other names for sodium such as salt, sodium chloride, monosodium glutamate, sodium nitrate, sodium bicarbonate and soy sauce
- **Choose lower-sodium products.** Look for foods with claims such as "salt-free" (less than 5 mg of sodium per serving), "low in sodium" (140 mg of sodium or less per serving), or "reduced in sodium" (at least 25 percent less than the regular product)
- **Shake the Habit.** Remove the salt shaker from the table and avoid adding salt to your food
- **Go for fresh vegetables and fruit.** They are naturally low in sodium
- **Limit** processed foods and eating at fast food outlets and restaurants
- **Prepare meals at home.** You control how much salt you use. Try different herbs and seasonings to bring out the flavours of your recipes

For more information:

[Hypertension Canada: Beyond the Salt Shaker](#)

[EatRight Ontario: Recipe Makeover - Reducing Sodium in the Kitchen](#)

[EatRight Ontario: Cut out the salt](#)

[Heart and Stroke Foundation](#)

Do you have questions on nutrition and healthy eating? Contact *EatRight Ontario* at 1-877-510-5102 to speak to a Registered Dietitian.