

Salt

What is salt?

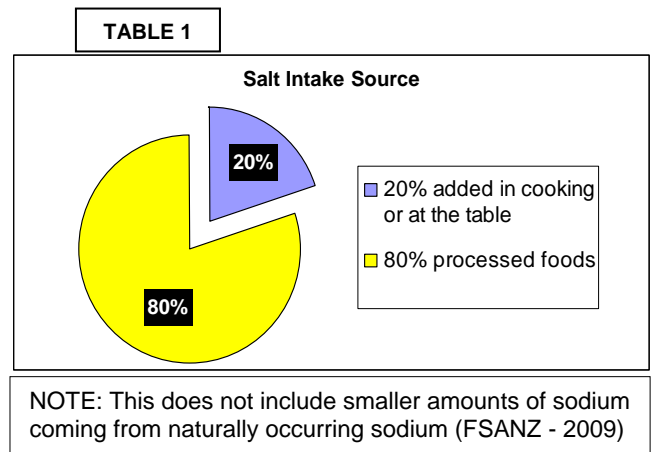
Salt is a chemical compound that consists of sodium and chloride. It is also called 'common salt' or 'table salt'. Salt is found naturally in foods, such as fruit, vegetables and meat. Salt is also added to foods during processing. Our bodies need a certain amount of sodium to function normally. Excess sodium can cause a number of health problems including excessive fluid retention, high blood pressure, heart disease and kidney disease.



How much salt do we need?

A recommended adequate intake for sodium is approximately 460 – 920mg for adults, and not more than 1600mg/day to reduce the risk of chronic disease. The sodium that occurs naturally in foods provides this amount of sodium.

The average Australian consumes up to 5,500mg of salt per day from the following sources (table 1)



Who needs to cut back on salt?

Everyone, regardless of age, should cut back on salt. A low salt intake can reduce the risk of health problems. For people with existing high blood pressure, heart disease or kidney problems, a low salt intake can assist in the control and management of these conditions.

How do we cut back on salt?

Step 1. Skip the salt!

- > Avoid adding salt to cooking and at the table
- > Steam or microwave your vegetables without adding salt (these cooking methods retain the natural flavour of the food)
- > Cook pasta, rice and potatoes without salt

Step 2. Choose low salt foods

- > Choose 'low salt', 'no added salt' or 'reduced salt' products where possible
- > Limit or avoid processed foods such as processed meats, commercial sauces, packet soups, packet seasonings, gravy powder, stock cubes and stock powder
- > Look for salt reduced stock powders
- > Avoid high salt snack foods e.g. potato chips/crisps, salted nuts, salted pop corn
- > Avoid high salt takeaway foods
- > Use unsalted nuts
- > Eat a wide variety of foods from different food groups
- > Try making your own sauces, pickles and chutneys without adding salt
- > Choose packaged foods with less than 120mg sodium per 100g (excellent choice) or less than 400mg sodium per 100g (good choice).

Salt

NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL		
	Per Serve	Per 100g
Energy		
- calories	68 cal	406 kJ
- kilojoules	284 kJ	97 cal
Protein	5.3 g	7.5 g
Fat		
- total	0.4 g	0.6 g
- saturated	0 g	0 g
Carbohydrate		
- total	14.9 g	21.3 g
- sugars	1.8 g	2.5 g
Dietary Fibre	4.3 g	6.2 g
Sodium	28mg	120mg

Sodium (salt)

Aim for less than 400mg per 100g and if possible less than 120mg per 100g
Look for 'no added salt' or 'salt reduced'

Step 3. Savour the flavour without salt

- > Add garlic, onion, horseradish, mustard or ginger to dishes for flavour
- > Use fresh or dried herbs to flavour food e.g. add rosemary or oregano to roasted lamb or beef, team chicken with thyme, add coriander to Asian dishes, add parsley and dill to scrambled eggs
- > Use lemon or other citrus fruits to flavour meats or for salad dressings
- > Fruit juices add a different taste to savoury dishes
- > Use spices to flavour your dishes e.g. cumin, cardamom, cloves, paprika, chilli and cinnamon
- > Add dry wine while cooking (a large component of the alcohol content evaporates and the flavour remains)



Step 4. Be aware of salt in disguise

There are a number of salt substitutes on the market (e.g. No Salt or Lite Salt). Most of these still contain significant amounts of sodium and are not recommended. Others contain salt in another form that are not suitable for people with particular health conditions, especially high blood pressure or kidney problems. Consult your dietitian or doctor before using any salt substitute.

There are many other types of salt available that need to be avoided. These include vegetable salt, celery salt, garlic salt, onion salt, rock salt, sea salt, monosodium glutamate (MSG) booster and ordinary stock powders. These are all the same as ordinary salt. The best and safest option is to avoid all types of salt and salt substitutes and use reduced salt stock powders!

There is a period of adjustment in taste when reducing salt intake. It may be easier to cut back slowly to allow your taste buds to adapt. Remember to be patient!

For more information

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