

Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland



# SALT



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

# This Essential Guide is about salt.

**It explains:**

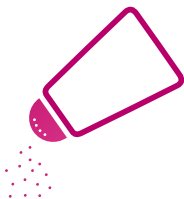
- why too much salt is bad for you
- how to know how much salt is in your food
- ways to reduce your salt intake.

# Salt and your health

Salt (also known as sodium chloride) contains sodium. You need a small amount of sodium to help balance the amount of water in your body. Sodium also helps to keep your muscles and nerves healthy.

However, too much sodium is bad for you. It changes the balance of water in your body. This means that you have extra water in your blood and your heart has to work harder to remove the water. This can lead to high blood pressure and increase your risk of heart disease and stroke.

Reducing the salt in your diet lowers your sodium intake and helps to reduce these risks.



# Where is salt found?

- Most of the salt we eat — **about three-quarters or 75%** — is 'hidden' in our food. Foods like bread, ready meals, processed meats, tinned soup, sauces and some breakfast cereals are all high in salt.
- **15%** of the salt we eat is not added but found naturally in food.
- Around **10%** of the salt we eat is the salt we add ourselves to food when we are cooking or eating.



# What is a healthy salt intake?

Healthy adults should have **no more than 6 grams of salt a day**. That's the same as about 1 level teaspoon of salt.

x1



**Eat no more than 1 level teaspoon of salt a day.**

# Are you eating more salt than you think?

Many of us are eating more salt than we think. This is because most of the salt we eat is hidden in processed food. For example...



Each of these contain  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon of salt\*:

- 1 pork pie
- 1 low-fat blueberry muffin
- 1 bowl of cornflakes with milk.



**Each of these contain  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon of salt\*:**

- 2 slices of beans on toast
- 1 tin of tomato soup
- 3 rashers of bacon.



**Each of these contain 1 teaspoon of salt\*:**

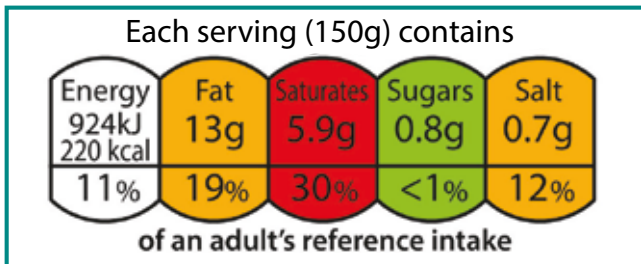
- 3-4 slices of takeaway pizza
- 4 sausages
- 3 tablespoons of soy sauce.

\*All figures are approximations.

# How do I know how much salt is in my food?

Lots of packaged foods have a colour-coded 'traffic light' nutrition label. This tells you if the food has high, medium or low amounts of salt, fat, saturated fat and sugar. The values are per serving or per 100g of the food.

**Check the label** and aim to eat more foods that are colour-coded green or amber.





Some packaged foods do not include a traffic light nutrition label. To find out the salt content, check the more detailed nutrition label on the back of the packet instead.

- Up to 0.3g of salt per 100g = low salt food.
- More than 1.5g of salt per 100g = high salt food.



Some food labels tell you the **sodium content** instead of salt. Multiply the grams of sodium by 2.5 to find out how much salt this is.

For example, 2.4g of sodium  $\times$  2.5 = 6g of salt.

# Tips for reducing your salt intake

Always check the nutrition label and aim to eat foods low in salt.

Avoid adding salt to your food when you are cooking or eating.

When cooking, try adding herbs, spices, black pepper, chilli, garlic or lemon for flavour instead of salt.

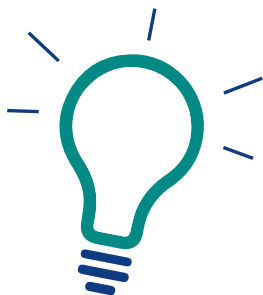
Leave the salt shaker off the table.

Stock cubes or granules can be high in salt. Use herbs and spices and make your own stock or gravy instead.

Drain and rinse canned vegetables and beans.

When eating out ask for 'no added salt' or sauces and gravies 'on the side'.

Avoid low salt or low sodium alternatives. These can be high in potassium, which is harmful for some people. They also stop your taste buds from getting used to less salt.



# Foods high in salt...



Processed meats (for example, bacon, ham, salami, sausages)



Cheese, especially hard and blue cheeses



Smoked or tinned fish



Tinned foods (for example, soup, baked beans)



Meat and yeast extracts, stock cubes, marmite



Crisps, salted or dry roasted peanuts



Bottled sauces such as soy sauce, ketchup, chutney, pickles, salad cream



Ready meals and takeaways

# ...lower salt alternatives



Fresh meat



Cottage cheese



Fresh fish



Fresh vegetables, homemade soup, dried beans, reduced-salt baked beans



Herbs, spices, chilli, garlic, ginger, lemon juice



Unsalted popcorn, unsalted nuts and seeds, dried fruit





Homemade sauces, fromage frais, natural yogurt





Homemade versions made with fresh ingredients


# Myths and Facts


 Food high in salt will taste salty - **MYTH**

 Food can be high in salt but not taste salty. High-salt foods include bread, pre-made sauces and ready meals - **FACT**


 Only older people or people with high blood pressure have to worry about how much salt they eat - **MYTH**


 Having a healthy salt intake, at any age, can help to prevent health problems such as high blood pressure - **FACT**


 Sweet food has no added salt - **MYTH**

 Processed sweet food often has salt added to it. This includes cakes, biscuits, ice-cream and chocolate. Always check the nutrition label - **FACT**

 Food won't taste so good with no added salt - **MYTH**

 Don't give up! After a few weeks of no longer adding salt, your taste buds will change and you will get the same flavours, but with less salt - **FACT**

 Himalayan pink salt and sea salt are healthier than table salt - **MYTH**

 Salt is salt. Some types of salt contain small amounts of extra minerals but they all contain around the same amount of sodium and have the same effect on your blood pressure - **FACT**

Our publications are available for free to anyone in Scotland who needs them. Go to [www.chss.org.uk/publications](http://www.chss.org.uk/publications) for all our resources, including other Essential Guides in this series.

For free, confidential advice and support from our **Advice Line nurses**, call: 0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm), text: NURSE to 66777 or email: [adviceline@chss.org.uk](mailto:adviceline@chss.org.uk).

Across Scotland, over one million people – that's one in five of us – are living with the effects of a chest, heart or stroke condition. We are here to help everyone who needs us. But we need your support to do this. Go to [www.chss.org.uk/supportus](http://www.chss.org.uk/supportus) to find out how you can help more people in Scotland.

**If you would like this resource in an alternative format, please contact our Advice Line nurses.**

**Chest  
Heart &  
Stroke  
Scotland**



**NO LIFE HALF LIVED**

**E8** Published June 2019  
Next planned review June 2022

Scottish Charity (no SC018761)