

SALT

This factsheet looks at the risks of eating too much salt and provides tips and advice on ways to reduce your salt intake.

Many of us eat too much salt. Too much salt can raise your blood pressure, which increases your risk of heart disease and stroke. By reducing your salt intake it is possible to reduce your blood pressure and the associated health problems. For people living with heart failure it is recommended to restrict salt in your diet, as too much salt can make symptoms worse.

You don't have to add salt to food to be eating too much – 75% of the salt we eat is 'hidden' in everyday foods such as bread, ready meals, processed meats, soup, sauces, and some breakfast cereals, 15% occurs naturally in the food we eat and 10% we add ourselves when cooking or eating.

How much salt do I need?

It is true that salt in very small amounts is essential to your health. A little salt is needed to help regulate the fluid in your body and to ensure muscles and nerves remain healthy. However, too much salt in your diet can be harmful. In Scotland, on average we eat 9.5g salt a day, but it is recommended that adults should eat **no more than 6g** of salt a day. So, what does 6g of salt look like...? It is about 1 teaspoon's worth.

Each of these contain ¼ teaspoon salt* =

- 1 individual pork pie
- 1 sausage roll
- 60g cornflakes with milk



Each of these contain ½ teaspoon salt* =

- 2 noodle sachets
- 1 tin of cream of tomato soup
- 3 rashers bacon



Each of these contain 1 teaspoon salt* =

- 1 cup instant soup
- 14 slices bread
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce

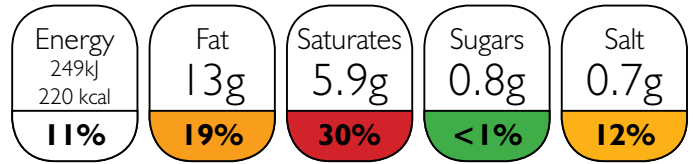


**All figures are approximations*

FACTSHEET

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

On all food labels, there should be a figure for the amount of salt per 100g.









- **HIGH** is more than 1.5g salt per 100g. These foods may be colour-coded red.
- **MEDIUM** is between 0.3g and 1.5g salt per 100g and is usually colour-coded amber.
- **LOW** is 0.3g salt or less per 100g. These foods may be colour-coded green

As a rule, you should aim to eat more foods that are colour-coded green (low) or amber (medium). Try to eat high-salt foods (colour-coded red) only occasionally or in very small amounts.

What can I use instead of salt?

Flavour doesn't only come from salt. Fresh and dried herbs, spices, black pepper, chilli and lemon are all great ways to add flavour to your food. Over time we acquire a taste for salt and get used to it in our diets but by using other flavours you can get used to less salt in your diet. It can take up to 6-8 weeks for your taste buds to adjust to a lower salt diet so don't give up and you will find you start to appreciate other flavours more.

Here are some suggestions of herbs and spices to use instead of salt to flavour your food, with ideas for what foods go with what flavouring:

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|--|---|---|---|
|  <p>Chilli coriander, broccoli, garlic, lime</p> |  <p>Nutmeg butternut squash, avocado, spinach</p> |  <p>Rosemary goat's cheese, potatoes, apricots</p> |  <p>Turmeric mushrooms, potatoes, lentils</p> |
| <p>Dill cucumber, lemon, fish</p> |  <p>Thyme mushrooms, chicken, garlic</p> |  <p>Paprika tomatoes, potatoes, chicken, eggs</p> | <p>Parsley potatoes, lemon, fish</p> |
| <p>Sage turkey, apples, pork</p> | <p>Coriander chilli, chickpeas, lentils</p> | <p>Mint broad beans, asparagus, cucumber, peas</p> | <p>Basil tomatoes, garlic</p> <p>Curry Powder chickpeas, lentils, eggs</p> |

How can I cut down my salt intake?

When choosing your food:

- Fresh is best; choose fresh foods over processed foods, packaged foods or takeaways.
- Look at the nutrition labels on food packaging when buying everyday items. In some foods, the salt content can vary widely between brands or varieties. This means you can really cut your salt intake by comparing brands and choosing the brand that is lower in salt.
- Pick reduced-salt and unsmoked products where possible. Foods such as cured meats and fish and smoked bacon can be high in salt, so try to eat these less often. Lean red meat or chicken are better options.
- If you are buying tinned vegetables and pulses, choose ones without added salt such as reduced-salt baked beans.
- Limit the use of soy sauce, mustard, pickles and table sauces as these can all be high in salt.



When cooking your food:

- Instead of using salt, try flavouring your foods with herbs (fresh or dried), black pepper, chilli, lemon or lime juice, spices, balsamic vinegar, onion, fresh garlic or ginger.
- Add fresh herbs and spices to pasta dishes, vegetables and meat. Try garlic, ginger, chilli and lime in stir fries.
- Lemon or lime juice and zest can be used in both sweet and savoury dishes.
- Make your own stock and gravy instead of using cubes or granules.
- Try baking or roasting vegetables such as red peppers, tomatoes, courgettes, fennel, parsnips and squash to bring out their flavour.



When eating your food:

- Shake the salt habit! Taste your food first and don't automatically add extra salt either at the table or in your cooking.
- Use pepper as seasoning instead of salt. Try it on pasta, scrambled egg, pizzas, fish and soups.

- Eat fewer salty snacks such as crisps and salted nuts.
- Try not to use low sodium/salt alternatives. They don't help your taste buds to adapt to less salt and they can be high in other minerals such as potassium (which may be harmful for some people).
- When eating out, ask for 'no added salt' and for sauces and gravies 'on the side'.



High-salt foods and low-salt alternatives

| High-salt foods | Low-salt alternatives |
|--|---|
| Processed meats (bacon, ham, salami, sausages) | Fresh meat |
| Cheese particularly hard and blue cheeses | Cottage cheese |
| Smoked or tinned fish | Fresh fish |
| Tinned foods (soup, baked beans, vegetables) | Fresh vegetables, home-made soup, dried beans, reduced-salt vegetables/ baked beans |
| Meat and yeast extracts, stock cubes, Marmite | Herbs, spices, chilli, garlic, ginger, lemon juice |
| Bottled sauces such as soy sauce, ketchup, chutney, pickles, salad cream | Home-made sauces, fromage frais, natural yoghurt |
| Crisps, salted or dry roasted peanuts | Unsalted popcorn, unsalted nuts and seeds, dried fruit |

For further information:

Food Standards Scotland (FSS)

www.foodstandards.gov.scot
Tel: 01224 285100

CASH (Consensus Action on Salt and Health)

www.actiononsalt.org.uk

Blood Pressure UK

www.bloodpressureuk.org

NHS Livewell

www.nhs.uk/LiveWell

British Dietetic Association

www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/salt.pdf

If you would like to speak to one of our nurses in confidence,
please call the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland Advice Line Nurses

0808 801 0899

Call FREE from landlines and mobiles