

# Sodium

## 1. What is the difference between salt and sodium?

You may see the terms “salt” and “sodium” used on many food packages and may sound like it has the same meaning. However, “salt” is the common name used for “sodium chloride”, which is made of 40% sodium and 60% chloride.

## 2. What are the daily recommendations for sodium?

A person should consume *less* than:

- **2,300 mg** of sodium (approximately 1 tsp) **per day**
- **1,500 mg** of sodium (approximately ½ tsp) **per day** if the person:
  - Is 51 and older
  - Is African American (at any age)
  - Has high blood pressure, diabetes or kidney disease

## 3. Is eating too much salt (sodium) bad for me?

Too much salt (sodium) in your food intake can increase your risk for high blood pressure. High blood pressure can lead to heart disease, stroke and kidney disease.

## 4. What are some tips to reduce salt (sodium) in my diet?

- Read food labels and choose foods that are labeled as “reduced sodium”, “low-sodium” or “sodium-free”
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables
- Use fresh poultry, fish and lean meats rather than canned or processed
- Use spices, herbs, lemon, garlic and onions to add flavor to food when cooking instead of salt
- Keep salt shakers off the table
- Cut down on eating out
- Watch for menu terms that may mean high sodium content: pickled, smoked, au juice, in broth, or sauce
- Do not rely on your taste when eating high sodium foods even if they don’t taste salty, such as:
  - Canned foods (vegetables, soups, beans)
  - Salted snacks and dry soups (chips, crackers, instant noodles)
  - Cured foods (bacon, hot dog sausages, lunch meats)
  - Condiments (ketchup, mayonnaise, sauces, salad dressings)
  - Prepared and packaged foods (frozen entrees, pizza, burritos)



### Label Lingo: What does it mean?

- **Reduced Sodium:** At least 25% or less sodium than in the original product
- **Low Sodium:** 140 mg or less sodium per serving
- **Very Low Sodium:** Less than 35 mg of sodium per serving.
- **Sodium-free:** Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
- **No-Salt-Added or Unsalted:** No salt is added but not necessarily sodium-free. Check those labels to be sure!

### For more information:

**U.S. Food & Drug Administration**  
<http://www.fda.gov/food/ingredients-packaging/labeling/nutrition/ucm315393.htm>

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**  
<http://www.cdc.gov/salt/>

**Los Angeles County Nutrition and Physical Activity Program**  
[www.lapublichealth.gov/nutrition](http://www.lapublichealth.gov/nutrition)  
 or call (213) 351-7889

CDIP-NUT-0001-01 (06/25/14)