

New Sodium (Salt) Warning Rule: What Food Service Establishments Need to Know

What is the new rule?

The new rule requires chain food service establishments to

- Show which food items have more than the recommended limit of sodium (salt) per day by placing a **warning icon** next to those items on menus, menu boards and item tags.
- Post the sodium **warning statement** where customers place their orders. The statement explains that items with the icon have more than the recommended limit of sodium per day and that having too much sodium is a health risk.

What is the recommended limit of sodium per day?

It is 2,300 mg—about 1 teaspoon of salt.

Why do high-sodium food items need to be labeled?

The average American adult consumes almost 50% more sodium than the recommended limit per day. Restaurant food tends to have more sodium than food prepared at home.

Consuming too much sodium is linked to

- Increased blood pressure
- Risk of heart disease
- Risk of stroke

Together, heart disease and stroke kill more Americans each year than *any* other cause.

Does this rule apply to my business?

This rule applies to **all food service establishments** that require a Health Department permit and are part of a **chain**. “Chain” refers to any establishment with 15 or more locations doing business in the U.S. under the same name and offering the same, or almost the same, menu items.

Food service establishments that are part of a chain and must follow the new rule include restaurants, cafeterias, mobile food vendors and temporary food vendors.

Where can I get the sodium warning icon?

This is the icon that must be posted. You can download the image from nyc.gov/health/salt and place it on your menus, menu boards and item tags.



Where must the icon be placed?

The icon must be placed directly on the menu, menu board or item tag next to any food item that has 2,300 mg of sodium or more.

What size should the icon be?

The icon must always be as wide as it is tall. (Do not stretch or shrink the icon's shape.) The icon must also be equal in height to the largest letter of the food item's name, as displayed on the menu, menu board or item tag.

What about combination meals (meals with multiple food items)?

If the entire combination meal contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you must place the sodium warning icon next to the combination meal on the menu.

Some combination meals allow customers to choose from different options for part of the meal. If any option results in a combination meal with 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you must place the sodium warning icon next to the combination meal on the menu.

What about menu items that can be customized or have different toppings?

If any possible version of the item contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you must place the sodium warning icon next to the item on the menu.

What about menu items with multiple servings?

Some menu items contain more than one serving and are intended to be shared by more than one person – for example, a “family-size” bucket of chicken or a large pizza pie divided into eight slices.

For these items, if the serving unit has less than 2,300 mg of sodium, you do not have to label the item with the warning icon – even if all servings added together would total more than 2,300 mg of sodium.

However, if each serving unit has 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you do have to place the sodium warning icon next to the item on the menu. The icon may be posted next to the listing for the entire item (for example, pizza pie) or next to the serving (for example, a slice), depending on how the item is listed on the menu.

Food items served on one person's plate are not multiple servings.

What is the warning statement?

The warning statement is another part of the new rule. This is the statement:

Warning:  indicates that the sodium (salt) content of this item is higher than the total daily recommended limit (2,300 mg). High sodium intake can increase blood pressure and risk of heart disease and stroke.

Where must the warning statement be posted?

It must be posted in a clearly visible place at the point where customers place their order at a chain food service establishment.

When does the new rule go into effect?

This rule goes into effect December 1, 2015.

The Health Department will start issuing violations March 1, 2016.

How will the Health Department enforce this rule?

When the rule takes effect, Health Department inspectors will educate food service establishments about the rule. Starting March 1, 2016, a restaurant that is not following the rule may get a violation that could lead to a \$200 fine. Getting a violation will not affect a restaurant's letter grade.

To read the new sodium warning Health Code regulation, visit: nyc.gov/health/salt. You can also call 311 and ask about the **sodium warning rule**. Health inspectors are also available to answer questions.

This fact sheet will be available in other languages on nyc.gov/health/salt.