

Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#72 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

Cut the Salt!



Many foods pack a lot more salt than you think.

TOO MUCH SALT CAN RAISE BLOOD PRESSURE AND LEAD TO HEART ATTACK AND STROKE



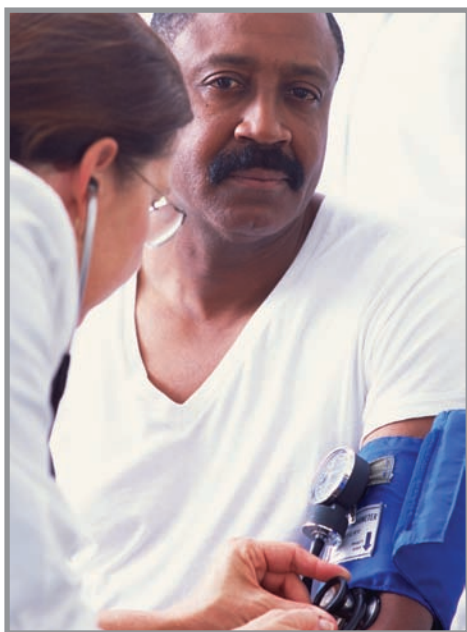
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Too much salt is harmful.

On average, people eat much more salt than they should.

- It's the sodium in salt that makes blood pressure go up.
- Cutting down on salt helps prevent and control high blood pressure.
- Most people should eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day. This is most important for people with high blood pressure, black people, and middle-aged and older people.
- Even people with normal blood pressure benefit from lower blood pressure. Lower blood pressure decreases the risk of heart attack and stroke.



Most restaurant meals and processed foods are full of salt.

Your salt shaker is not the main problem!

- Most of the salt we eat – almost 80% – comes from packaged, processed and store-bought food, and from restaurant meals (including fast food).
- Only about 10% of the sodium in our diet comes from salt we add during cooking or at the table.
- The rest is found naturally in food.



Check food labels before you buy.

Read the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less sodium.

Chicken & Rice Soup	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (239g)	
Servings Per Container 2	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 100	Calories from Fat 15
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 15mg	5%
Sodium 870mg	36%
Total Carbohydrate 15g	5%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 1g	

- This can of chicken & rice soup has 870 mg of sodium per serving. That is a lot! Most people should eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- Be sure to check the serving size and the number of servings per container.
- This can contains two servings, so if you eat the whole can, you'll get TWICE as much sodium – more than you should eat in a day!

Compare the amount of sodium in different brands.

Salty foods don't always TASTE salty, so always check the label.



Sodium 870mg

Choose the lowest!

Sodium 480mg

Shopping for food

- Fresh foods usually have less salt than canned or processed foods.
- Canned items such as beans and soup broth can be very high in salt. Compare labels and look for “low-sodium” or “no-salt-added” versions.
- Check the label when you buy raw meat; even it often has added salt.
- Processed foods marketed as “healthy” or “low-fat” may have a lot of sodium. Always check the label.
- Salad dressings and condiments, such as ketchup and soy sauce, are often high in sodium.



At home




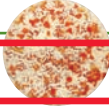






- Cut down on salt gradually, over a few weeks or even months. You’ll be less likely to notice a difference.
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables instead of salty chips and popcorn.
- Try ½ teaspoon of salt when recipes call for 1 teaspoon.
- Be aware that some seasonings like adobo, garlic salt and lemon pepper contain salt.
- Create your own salt-free seasonings using oregano, basil, celery seed, curry powder, cayenne pepper or other herbs and spices to add flavor.
- Many salt substitutes contain potassium. If you are taking medications regularly or have kidney disease, talk to your doctor before using a salt substitute.

Eating out

- Ask for your meal to be prepared without added salt. You can always salt to taste.
- Some restaurants – especially chain restaurants – provide nutritional information. Ask for a copy.

Same Foods – BIG Difference in Sodium

The amount of sodium in processed foods varies a LOT by brand.

	Serving Size	Range of Sodium (mg) per Serving*
Canned soup 	1 cup	50-950
Canned vegetables 	½ cup	10-550
Sliced bread 	1 slice	100-240
Frozen cheese pizza 	1 slice	510-1090
Frozen meals 	6-10 ounces	330-1130
Tomato juice 	8 ounces	140-680
Salad dressing 	2 tablespoons	80-620
Salsa 	2 tablespoons	90-250
Potato chips 	1 ounce	10-380
Pretzels 	1 ounce	50-610

*Based on a convenience sample

Always read labels. By choosing your pizza wisely, you can avoid 580 mg of sodium!

More Information and Help

- **New York City Health Department:** nyc.gov/health or call 311
- **Health Bulletins (healthy heart):** nyc.gov/heart or call 311:
 - #50 High Blood Pressure – It’s In Your Court
 - #51 How to Lose Weight and Keep It Off
 - #55 Taking Your Medicine – How to Make It Easier
 - #76 Good Fats/Bad Fats
- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (how to read food labels):** <http://www.fda.gov/food/LabelingNutrition/ConsumerInformation/ucm078889.htm>
- **MedLine Plus (National Institutes of Health):** www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dietarysodium.html
- **American Heart Association:** www.heart.org
- **American Dietetic Association:** www.eatright.org

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VOLUME 8, NUMBER 5

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Prepared in cooperation with:

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Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Control
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