

# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#82 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**



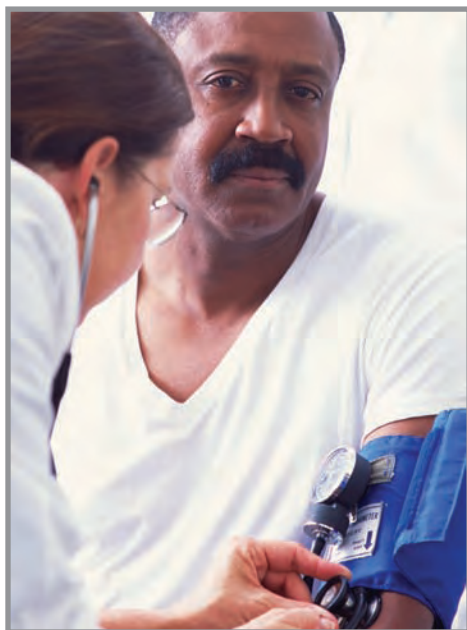
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## Too much salt is harmful.

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.

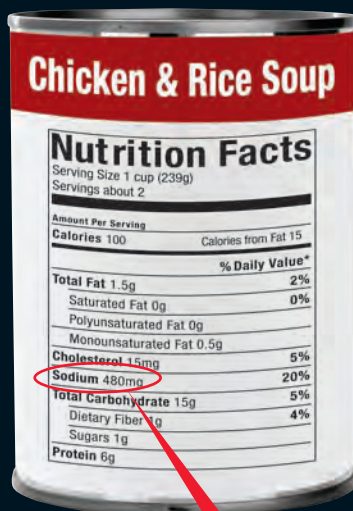
Read the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less sodium.

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%
<b>Sodium 870mg</b>	<b>36%</b>
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](http://nyc.gov/health) or call 311
- **Health Bulletins (healthy heart):** [nyc.gov/heart](http://nyc.gov/heart) or call 311:
  - #50 High Blood Pressure – It’s In Your Court
  - #51 How to Lose Weight and Keep It Off
  - #73 Are You Pouring on the Pounds?
  - #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](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/dietarysodium.html)
- **American Heart Association:** [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)
- **American Dietetic Association:** [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)

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## **Cut the Salt!**

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