



*Salt and Health:  
Frequently Asked Questions*

**1. Why should we be concerned about salt?**

Excessive salt intake raises blood pressure, increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. The recommended sodium limit is 2,300 mg for the general population, but most Americans consume too much. By limiting salt intake we can lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

**2. Where does most of the salt in the diet come from?**

Over 75% of the salt in our diets comes from packaged and prepared foods, and the foods that contribute the most salt to our diets don't always taste salty; whole wheat bread can have twice as much salt as potato chips. Because we don't actively choose the amount of salt in our diets, even health-conscious people tend to consume more than they mean to.

**3. Why is reducing everyone's salt intake important?**

A high sodium diet is especially dangerous for people who already have high blood pressure – a condition affecting 29% of all adults in the United States. However, everyone can benefit from reducing their sodium intake because lifetime intake of excess sodium can increase risk for high blood pressure, heart attack, and stroke over time. Average sodium consumption in the United States is around 3,400 mg per day, which is well above the recommended levels of sodium intake, so most Americans can afford to reduce their sodium intake to get to more healthful levels.

**4. Table salt provides iodine. Will reducing salt intake lead to iodine deficiency?**

The targets will not affect the iodized salt that most consumers use in their own kitchens. Reducing the salt in processed foods is unlikely to have a significant effect on iodine levels because many manufacturers use non-iodized salt.

**5. Can manufacturers reduce salt content without compromising food safety?**

Yes. While salt has functional properties that can help preserve and stabilize food, salt can still be reduced in most foods without affecting safety or quality. Similar food products already vary widely in salt content, and companies in other countries have successfully reduced salt levels in many types of products.

**6. How will reducing salt affect the taste of foods?**

The food industry has already achieved large reductions in some products without consumers noticing. Studies show that sodium can be reduced by up to 48% in certain products without compromising consumer acceptance, and consumers' palates can adjust quickly to changes in sodium levels.

**7. What if a product is reformulated and the public doesn't like the new taste?**

In the United Kingdom, consumers and manufacturers have readily accepted the gradual decline in salt levels across a wide range of products. Similar progress is achievable in the United States, if food makers are willing to develop lower-salt products and recipes that consumers like.