



Sodium—essential in moderation

What is salt?

Salt is a crystal made up of two minerals—sodium and chloride. It is the main source of sodium in our diets. Iodine is added to most forms of table salt in Canada, so that we can get enough iodine in our diets.

How much sodium do I need?

In Canada, we consume much more sodium than is recommended. Our intake of sodium is more than double the amount we need.

Ages (years)	Adequate Intake (mg)
1-3	1000
4-8	1200
9-13	1500
14-18	1500
19-30	1500
31-50	1500
51-70	1300
>70	1200

Based on current nutrition recommendations, an adequate intake of sodium would be between 1000 – 1500 mg, depending upon our age. People who perspire heavily, such as athletes, or individuals who do a lot of physical work, may need more.

Where do I get sodium?

Some sodium is found naturally in foods. We also get sodium from the salt we add to the food we cook and to our food at the table. About three quarters of the sodium we consume is from sodium added to foods during processing.

Most sodium is added as salt, but there are other forms of sodium in processed foods. Read the ingredient list. Baking soda, baking powder, sodium nitrate, sodium benzoate, monosodium glutamate (MSG)—all ingredients that mean sodium is added to the food.

Why is sodium added to foods?

Sodium is added to many foods for many reasons. The most important are:

- 1. Taste**—salt enhances the natural flavour of foods. For example, tomato soup or bread would not be very appetizing without salt.
- 2. Safety**—foods such as deli meats, salted meat or fish, cheese and fermented foods such as pickles and sauerkraut, require salt to control bacteria growth.
- 3. Function**—salt is used in bread and baking to control the action of yeast and to strengthen the dough. It is also used in cheese making to control the moisture content.

? *Did you know*

Salt or sodium

1000 mg of sodium is the amount in about 2.5 grams of salt. Depending on the coarseness of the salt, this could be between 2 and 2.5 mL (1/2 teaspoon)








Does sodium increase blood pressure?

Maintaining a healthy body weight, being physically active, drinking alcohol in moderation or not at all, and decreasing your sodium intake, will help decrease your risk for developing high blood pressure. Age and family history play a role too. High blood pressure, also known as hypertension, is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

Tips for choosing foods with less sodium:

Check out the food label:

-  Compare two similar products and choose the one with a lower % Daily Value of sodium, or
-  Look for nutrient content claims on the package that say “25% less sodium”, “reduced in sodium”, “low salt” or “low sodium”.
-  Read the ingredient list. Salt, sodium chloride, baking soda, baking powder, sodium nitrate, sodium benzoate, monosodium glutamate (MSG) are all ingredients that mean sodium is added to the food.

Nutrition Facts	
Per 1 slice (45g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Calories 110	
Fat 1.5g	2%
Saturated Fat 0.4 g + Trans Fat 0 g	2%
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 160 mg	7%
Carbohydrate 19 g	6%
Fibre 3 g	12%
Sugars 2 g	
Protein 5 g	
Vitamin A 0%	Vitamin C 0%
Calcium 2%	Iron 8%

Sandwich tips for reducing sodium

- Compare the % Daily Value for sodium between breads—many whole grain breads in Canada have reduced the sodium levels.
- Use leftover grilled chicken breast, beef or pork roast thinly sliced rather than deli meats.
- Buy block cheese rather than processed cheese which is higher in sodium.
- Choose spreads that are flavourful yet lower in sodium
 - mustard or zucchini relish has a Daily Value of sodium of about 2%;
 - try sodium reduced versions of your favourite spread.
- Add lettuce, tomatoes, sliced cucumbers, grated carrot or sliced apples for moisture and crunch—but don't sprinkle with salt!



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