



A Nutrition Resource

SODIUM

Most Americans have too much sodium in their diet. Although some sodium is needed, too much can increase blood pressure and risk for heart disease and stroke.

What is the recommended amount of sodium per day?

The USDA recommends the following sodium limits (in milligrams) for specific age groups:

- Ages 1-3: 1200 mg/day
- Ages 4-8: 1500 mg/day
- Ages 9-13: 1800 mg/day
- All other age groups: 2300 mg/day

The American Heart Association recommends, "No more than 2300 mg per day and moving toward an ideal limit of no more than 1500 mg per day for most adults."

**For reference, one
teaspoon of salt contains
about 2300 mg of sodium.
The average sodium
intake among Americans
is 3400 mg per day.**

Where does the sodium we eat come from?

Even if you don't salt your food during cooking or before eating, you could easily be getting too much sodium in your diet.

- Most sodium consumed in the U.S. (about 70%) comes from salt added during commercial food processing, including foods from restaurants.
- Only a small proportion of sodium intake is from naturally-occurring salt in food.

What can we do to cut back on sodium in our diet?

AT THE STORE:

- Read the nutrition facts label carefully; choose products lower in sodium.
- If you use condiments like soy sauce, salad dressing, mustard, ketchup, and relish, look for the low-sodium versions.
- Choose canned vegetables and beans with 'no salt added' whenever possible.
- Limit purchases of salted snacks, frozen dinners, processed meat, mixes, and instant products like flavored rice or pasta.
- Choose low-sodium soups and canned foods such as beans, tomatoes, tuna, salmon.

WHEN PREPARING FOOD:

- Reduce the salt in recipes by half, and gradually reduce salt further each time.
- Use onions, garlic, herbs, spices, vinegar, and lemon juice in place of salt.
- Drain and rinse canned beans and vegetables.
- Cook pasta without salt.
- Remove the salt shaker from the table.

What about salt substitutes?

Salt substitutes can be a healthy alternative; however, do not use salt substitutes, especially those containing potassium, without talking to a healthcare professional first.



What is the difference between salt and sodium?

Sodium is a component of salt. Table salt is 40% sodium and 60% chloride.

How much lower in sodium are 'low-sodium' versions of foods?

Lower- and higher-sodium versions of similar foods can be very different in the amount of sodium they contain. The table below shows some examples:



AMOUNT	REGULAR FOOD ITEM	SODIUM (mg)	LOW-SODIUM FOOD ITEM	SODIUM (mg)
1 cube	Bouillon	960	Bouillon, unsalted	3
1 large	Pickle	1425	Cucumber	1
1 cup	Tomato juice	878	Tomato juice, unsalted	14
1 cup	Tomato soup	932	Tomato soup, low-sodium	34
3 ounces	Deli turkey slices	775	Turkey, roasted without salt	87
¼ cup	Peanuts, salted	246	Peanuts, unsalted	2
2 tablespoons	Peanut butter	150-250	Peanut butter, unsalted	0

How much sodium is in homemade food?

Use the table below to figure out how much sodium will be in each serving when cooking or baking. For example, a recipe that serves 4 and calls for 1 teaspoon of salt will contain 580 milligrams of sodium per serving from the salt. (This number is in bold in the table.) Keep in mind that this table only shows you the sodium from table salt in the recipe. Other ingredients, like broth or soy sauce, may also contain sodium.

Milligrams of Sodium (Amount per Serving)					
AMOUNT OF SALT	NUMBER OF SERVINGS IN A RECIPE				
	1	2	4	6	8
¼ teaspoon	580	290	145	97	81
½ teaspoon	1160	580	290	194	145
1 teaspoon	2325	1160	580	388	290
1½ teaspoons	3490	1745	870	580	436
2 teaspoons	4650	2325	1160	775	580

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – SNAP. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact the Montana Public Assistance Helpline at 1-888-706-1535 or www.apply.mt.gov. Montana State University Extension is an ADA/EO/AA/Veteran's Preference Employer and Provider of Educational Outreach.