

Salt

In the UK many people eat too much salt. Most people would benefit from having less salt.

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure. This can increase the risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Salt contains sodium and it is this can raise your blood pressure if you have too much.

Benefits of having less salt

- Having less salt can reduce your blood pressure. This is the case whether or not your blood pressure is high to start with.
- Having lower blood pressure means your risk of having a heart attack or stroke goes down.
- Your taste buds will adjust to having less salt, and you may find food actually tastes better with less salt.

How much salt you can have

The recommendation for **adults** is to eat **less than 6g of salt** (or less than 2.4g sodium*) a day . However, it is not just the salt you add to your food in cooking or at the table that counts. Most of the salt we eat is already in everyday foods such as bacon, bread, cereals and cheese.

Children should have even less salt. These are the maximum recommended daily intakes for children:

Age	Daily maximum intake	Age	Daily maximum intake
Up to 6 months old:	Less than 1g a day (0.4g sodium*)	4 to 6 years:	3g a day (1.2g sodium*)
7 to 12 months:	1g a day (0.4g sodium*)	7 to 10 years:	5g a day (2g sodium*)
1 to 3 years:	2g a day (0.8g sodium*)	Children over 11 years:	Less than 6g a day (2.4g sodium*)

*See over page on how to convert sodium to salt

How to eat less salt

- **Gradually** cut down the amount of salt. Your taste buds will adjust over time.
- Use only a little salt in cooking or none at all.
- Do not add salt at the table.
- Avoid using garlic salt or celery salt.
- Use as many fresh foods as possible - rather than convenience or packet foods.
- Try making gravy with meat juices thickened with flour or cornflour. If making gravy with stock cubes or gravy granules try to use half as much or cut them out altogether.
- Try to choose products that say 'no added salt'.
- Avoid using salty seasonings, marinades and table sauces regularly.
- Have salty foods less often and have smaller portions—see the table over the page for foods high in salt.

Foods high in salt

Most foods contain some salt as it occurs naturally in foods. It is processed foods that have salt added that we need to cut down on.

The following foods are high in salt. Having these foods less often and having smaller portions will help reduce the amount of salt you eat:

Meat and fish		Other foods		
• Bacon	• Smoked meat and fish	• Baked beans	• Pickles	• Tomato juice
• Black pudding	• Tinned meat	• Cheese	• Ready meals	• Tinned vegetables in salt water
• Burgers	• Bovril	• Marmite	• Sandwiches	• Ready made pasta sauces
• Haggis	• Gravy granules	• Mayonnaise	• Soy sauce	• Yeast extract
• Ham	• Stock cubes	• Packet soups	• Take away meals	
• Meat extract	• Anchovies	• Peanut butter	• Tinned soups	
• Meat paste	• Fish paste			
• Pies	• Prawns			
• Salami	• Ackee (salt fish)			
• Sausages	• Tinned fish in brine			
		Snacks		
		• Crisps	• Salted popcorn	
		• Salted nuts	• Other savoury snacks	
		• Olives		

Bread and breakfast cereals are an important part of a healthy diet, but these can have a lot of added salt. Compare labels when choosing these and buy ones with the lowest amount of salt.

Salt and food labels

Salt is also called sodium chloride. Food labels often use both salt and sodium.

*To convert salt to sodium divide by 2.5 and to convert sodium to salt multiply by 2.5

For example: 1.2g salt ÷ 2.5 = 0.48g sodium 0.5g sodium x 2.5 = 1.25g salt

Be careful, as foods claiming to contain **moderate amounts** could still be a **large** proportion of your daily limit, and especially for children.

Use the following guidelines to help you choose lower salt options:

Low Per 100g of product	Moderate Per 100g of product	High Per 100g of product
0.3g salt or less 0.1g sodium or less	0.3g to 1.5g salt 0.1g to 0.6g sodium	1.5g salt or more 0.6g sodium or more

Flavouring your food

The following seasoning suggestions can bring out the flavour of foods. Use these instead of salt:

- Garlic
- Lemon juice
- Mustard
- Onion
- Vinegar
- Basil
- Bayleaf
- Chives
- Cloves
- Curry powder
- Ginger
- Mint
- Mixed herbs
- Nutmeg
- Paprika
- Parsley
- Pepper
- Rosemary
- Sage
- Thyme

Can I have salt alternatives?

It is better to get used to less salt instead of using alternatives such as Lo Salt, Solo or Seagreens.

What about sea salt or rock salt?

All forms of salt contain sodium. It is the sodium that raises blood pressure. This is the case whether it is sea or rock salt or whether it comes in grains, flakes or crystals.

If you are concerned about your diet or have any queries regarding this advice please contact a dietitian at Bedford Hospital via telephone: 01234 792171 or email: Dietetics@bedfordhospital.nhs.uk