

Chest
Heart &
Stroke
Scotland



SALT



ESSENTIAL GUIDE

This Essential Guide is about salt.

It explains:

- why too much salt is bad for you
- how to know how much salt is in your food
- ways to reduce your salt intake.

This booklet deals mostly with high blood pressure, which often means you need to reduce your salt intake.

However, some other conditions such as PoTS may mean that you need more salt to raise your fluid intake.

If you think this may apply to you, ask your doctor. You can also check PoTS UK for more information: **www.potsuk.org**

Salt and your health

Salt (also known as **sodium chloride**) contains sodium. You need a small amount of sodium to help balance the amount of water in your body. Sodium also helps to keep your muscles and nerves healthy.

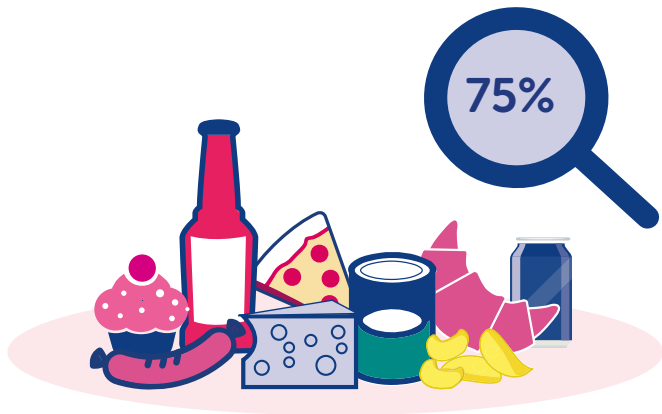
However, too much sodium is bad for you. It increases the amount of water in your blood. This means that there is a higher volume of blood in your body, and it is more diluted. In order to move enough oxygen and nutrients to the rest of your body, your heart has to beat harder.

This leads to high blood pressure and a greater risk of heart complications.

Reducing the salt in your diet lowers your sodium intake and helps to reduce these risks.

Where is salt found?

- Most of the salt we eat – **about three-quarters or 75%** – is 'hidden' in our food. Foods like bread, ready meals, processed meats, tinned soup, sauces and some breakfast cereals are all high in salt.
- **15%** of the salt we eat is not added but found naturally in food.
- Around **10%** of the salt we eat is the salt we add ourselves to food when we are cooking or eating.



What is a healthy salt intake?

Healthy adults should have **no more than 6 grams of salt a day**. That's the same as about 1 level teaspoon of salt.

x1



Eat no more than 1 level teaspoon of salt a day.

Are you eating more salt than you think?

Many of us are eating more salt than we think. This is because most of the salt we eat is hidden in processed food. For example...



Each of these contain $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt*:

- 1 pork pie
- 1 low-fat blueberry muffin
- 1 bowl of cornflakes with milk.



Each of these contain $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of salt*:

- beans on toast (2 slices)
- 1 tin of tomato soup
- 3 rashers of bacon.



Each of these contain 1 teaspoon of salt*:

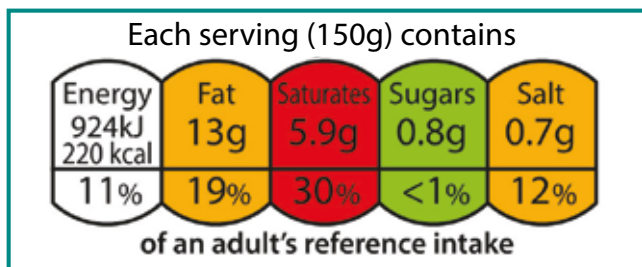
- 3-4 slices of takeaway pizza
- 4 sausages
- 3 tablespoons of soy sauce.

*All figures are approximations.

How do I know how much salt is in my food?

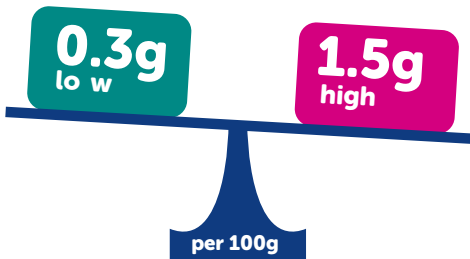
Lots of packaged foods have a colour-coded 'traffic light' nutrition label. This tells you if the food has high, medium or low amounts of salt, fat, saturated fat and sugar. The values may be per serving or per 100g of the food - the label should tell you which.

Check the label and aim to eat more foods that are colour-coded green or amber.



Some packaged foods do not include a traffic light nutrition label. To find out the salt content, check the more detailed nutrition label on the back of the packet instead.

- Up to 0.3g of salt per 100g = low salt food.
- More than 1.5g of salt per 100g = high salt food.



Some food labels tell you the **sodium content** instead of salt. Multiply the grams of sodium by 2.5 to find out how much salt this is.

For example, 2.4g of sodium \times 2.5 = 6g of salt.

Tips for reducing your salt intake

Always check the nutrition label and aim to eat foods low in salt.

Avoid adding salt to your food when you are cooking or eating.

When cooking, try adding herbs, spices, black pepper, chilli, garlic or lemon for flavour instead of salt.

Leave the salt shaker off the table.

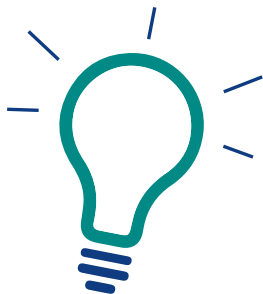
Most salt comes from highly processed foods. Cook meals from scratch if you can, so you know all the ingredients.

Stock cubes or granules can be high in salt. Use herbs and spices and make your own stock or gravy instead.

Drain and rinse canned vegetables and beans.

When eating out ask for 'no added salt' or sauces and gravies 'on the side'.

Avoid "low salt" or "low sodium" alternatives made to mimic salty foods. These can be high in potassium, which is harmful for some people. They also stop your taste buds from getting used to less salt.



Foods high in salt...



Processed meats (for example, bacon, ham, salami, sausages).



Cheese, especially hard and blue cheeses.



Smoked or tinned fish.



Tinned foods (for example, soup, baked beans).



Meat and yeast extracts, like stock cubes or marmite.



Snack foods like crisps, pork scratchings, or salted/dry-roasted nuts.



Bottled sauces like ketchup, chutney, pickles, soy sauce, or salad cream.



Ready meals and **takeaways.**

...lower salt alternatives



Fresh meat.



Cottage cheese.



Fresh fish.



Fresh vegetables, homemade soup, dried beans, reduced-salt baked beans.



Herbs, spices, chilli, garlic, ginger, lemon juice.



Unsalted popcorn, unsalted nuts and seeds, dried fruit.





Homemade sauces, fromage frais, natural yogurt.





Homemade versions made with fresh ingredients.


Myths and Facts


 **MYTH:** Food high in salt will taste salty.

 **FACT:** Food can be high in salt but not taste salty. High-salt foods include bread, pre-made sauces and ready meals.


 **MYTH:** Only older people or people with high blood pressure have to worry about how much salt they eat.


 **FACT:** Having a healthy salt intake, at any age, can help to prevent health problems such as high blood pressure.


 **MYTH:** Sweet food has no added salt.

 **FACT:** Processed sweet food often has salt added to it. This includes cakes, biscuits, ice-cream and chocolate. Always check the nutrition label

 **MYTH:** Food won't taste so good with no added salt.

 **FACT:** After a few weeks of no longer adding salt, your taste buds will change and you will get the same flavours, but with less salt. Don't give up too soon!

 **MYTH:** Himalayan pink salt and sea salt are healthier than table salt.

 **FACT:** Salt is salt. Some types of salt contain small amounts of extra minerals but they all contain around the same amount of sodium and have the same effect on your blood pressure.

Our publications are available for free to anyone in Scotland who needs them. Go to www.chss.org.uk/resources-hub for all our resources, including other Essential Guides in this series.

For free, confidential advice and support from our **Advice Line nurses**, call: 0808 801 0899 (Mon-Fri 9.30am-4pm), text: NURSE to 66777 or email: adviceline@chss.org.uk.

Across Scotland, over one million people – that's one in five of us – are living with the effects of a chest, heart or stroke condition. We are here to help everyone who needs us. But we need your support to do this. Go to www.chss.org.uk/supportus to find out how you can help more people in Scotland.

If you would like this resource in an alternative format, please contact our Advice Line nurses.

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NO LIFE HALF LIVED

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