Salt and your health

How do I choose less salty foods?

How much salt is too much?

Do I eat too much salt?

Where do I get salt from?

What is sodium?

How do I add less salt to food?

1. One step at a time
   - If you add salt at the table, stop this habit first.
   - Don’t put the salt shaker on the dinner table.
   - Start using less salt when you are cooking.
   - Reduce your salt intake gradually.

2. Tips to cook with less salt
   - Taste your food during cooking before you add salt, as it may not need it.
   - If you have already added salty spices or a stock cube, you don’t need salt too.
   - If you used salt during cooking you don’t need to add more at the table.

To make your food tasty try these herbs and unsalted spices instead of salt:
   - Lemon juice or vinegar
   - Herbs like Italian herbs mix, parsley or rosemary
   - Spices like curry powder, paprika or pepper
   - Garlic, ginger, chilli and onions

When you and your family use less salt, you are making a decision to live a healthier life.
Don’t give up, keep trying every day!

Salt Watch is brought to you by the Heart and Stroke Foundation South Africa.

Visit: www.saltwatch.co.za
www.heartfoundation.co.za

Phone: Heart and Stroke Health Line on 08601 HEART (43278)

Email: heart@heartfoundation.co.za

Use salty food less often

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods low in salt</th>
<th>Moderate salt foods</th>
<th>Foods high in salt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat more often</td>
<td>Eat sometimes</td>
<td>Eat less often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foods prepared at home from fresh ingredients</td>
<td>Salted nuts</td>
<td>All types of salt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits and vegetables (fresh, frozen and dried)</td>
<td>Cakes, pastries and biscuits</td>
<td>Seasoning salts like barbeque or chicken spice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsalted nuts and seeds</td>
<td>Table sauces (tomato sauce and mustard)</td>
<td>Stock cubes, gravy and soup powders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans, lentils and peas</td>
<td>Salad dressings</td>
<td>Take-away foods, pizza and crumbed meat or chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mealie meal</td>
<td>Mayonnaise</td>
<td>Crisps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasta and rice</td>
<td>Convenience meals</td>
<td>Salty spreads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain popcorn</td>
<td>Burgers and pies</td>
<td>Worcestershire and soya sauce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>Soft tub margarine</td>
<td>Processed meats like polonies, viennas, salami, hams, sausages and boerewors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh fish</td>
<td>Pate and hummus</td>
<td>Cured meat and fish like bacon, biltong, bokkoms, anchovies, corned beef and pickled tongue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fresh chicken and meat</td>
<td>Bread and bread products</td>
<td>Cheese, Butter and hard margarine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>Breakfast cereals</td>
<td>Instant noodles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoghurt and maas</td>
<td>Baked beans</td>
<td>Olives and pickles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plain cottage cheese</td>
<td>Peanut butter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Too much salt is bad for you

- Your body needs only a small amount of salt to be healthy.
- Eating more salt than you need can be unhealthy as it can increase your blood pressure.
- High blood pressure can cause heart disease and strokes.
- High blood pressure and heart disease develops over many years.
- Many people don’t know they have high blood pressure as one cannot feel it.
- Your blood pressure should be checked yearly.
- You can keep your body healthy by starting to use less salt today.

How much salt is too much?

- You should eat no more than 5 g of salt per day.
- 5 g is the same as one teaspoon of salt.
- This 5 g includes the salt that you add to your food as well as salt already found in foods.

Where do I get salt from?

- Many foods that you buy already have salt in them and this is called hidden salt. Often these foods don’t look or taste salty.
- Examples of foods with a lot of hidden salt include:
  - Bread and breakfast cereals
  - Sausages and other processed meats
  - Stock, soup and gravy powders
  - Hard brick margarine
- The table at the back shows other foods high in salt.
- We add more salt to our food when we cook and at the table.

Do I eat too much salt?

- Many South Africans eat too much salt. In fact we eat twice the amount of salt we should!
- It can be very easy to eat too much salt when eating normal everyday foods.
- Half of the salt we eat is from salt added by manufacturers during the processing of foods.
- The other half of the salt we eat comes from salt we add during cooking and salt sprinkled on at the table.

What is sodium?

- Salt is made up of two parts – Sodium and Chloride.
- Sodium is the part of salt that can increase your blood pressure when you eat too much of it.
- 5 g of salt is the same as 2000 mg of sodium.

How to choose less salty foods

1. Learn how much salt is in food

- Look on the ingredient list for these words:
  - Salt or any ingredient that contains the word “sodium”
  - MSG, baking soda or baking powder
- If any of these words are in the first 3 ingredients on the food label of a food, it is likely to be high in salt.
- The Nutritional Information Table on some food packets also tells us how much sodium is in food.
- Use the simple table below to help you compare how much sodium is in 100 g of different foods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sodium Level</th>
<th>Per 100g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>120 mg or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>120 mg - 600 mg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>600 mg or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember to look at per 100 g of food and not per serving.

2. Look for the Heart Mark logo

- Foods with this logo on are healthier choices and lower in salt than similar products.

3. Use salty foods less often

- Fresh foods have less salt than processed foods.
- Try using more fresh foods and less processed foods.
- Use the table at the back to help you choose foods that are low in salt more often.

Nutritional Information Table

- Approved as part of the Heart and Stroke Foundation Eating Plan