

The Shakedown on Sodium

What is sodium?

Sodium is a mineral. Our bodies use it to help muscles and nerves work properly. We also need it to maintain our fluid balance and blood pressure. Most of the sodium we eat is sodium chloride, also known as salt.

How much sodium do I need?

The best estimate for a daily sodium intake, from all sources, is 1500 milligrams (mg)/day for healthy people 19 years and older¹. That is the amount of sodium in just over half of a teaspoon of salt. Or, in metric measure, 1500 mg of sodium is about 2.5 mL of salt².

Over half (58%) of all Canadians consume more than 2300 mg/day of sodium. As well, 72% of children between the ages of 4 and 13 years consume too much sodium³.



How does too much sodium affect our health?

Current evidence shows that healthy people 14 years of age and older who are consuming more than 2300 mg/day of sodium could lower their risk of cardiovascular disease and hypertension by reducing their sodium intake to 1500 mg/day or ½ teaspoon (2.5 mL) of salt¹.

To speak with a Registered Dietitian about your personal health call [Health Connect Ontario](#) at 811. To find a dietitian in the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District area see our local [Registered Dietitians Service Directory](#) or call 1-800-660-5853.

Which foods contain sodium?

Salt is used to flavour food, preserve and ferment it and to change its texture. Bakery products, mixed dishes such as pizza, lasagna, refrigerated or frozen entrées and appetizers, frozen potatoes and prepared salads as well as processed meats make up half of the food sources of sodium consumed by Canadians. Other food sources include cheeses, soups, sauces, condiments, fat, oils, spreads, dressings, snacks such as chips and pretzels and fish and seafood products³.

Did you know . . .

If you slowly cut back on salty foods, your desire for salt decreases? Try it, you'll be amazed; over time you won't even miss the salt!

Not all foods high in salt taste salty so when choosing foods:

- ▶ Know that even foods without a claim may be a good choice. Instead of front-of-package claims use the Nutrition Facts Table. To learn about Nutrient claims on the front of food packaging go to <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/understanding-food-labels/nutrient-content-claims-what-they-mean.html>.
- ▶ Look for the Nutrition Facts Table on the package and find the % Daily Value (DV). As a guide: 5% DV or less means the product has a little sodium and 15% DV or more means it has a lot.
- ▶ Use the % Daily Value to compare products. Be sure to compare equal serving sizes. For more information go to healthycanadians.ca and search for “% Daily Value”.
- ▶ Check food labels often because product ingredients may change.
- ▶ You can also read the ingredients list. The following are ingredients that mean or contain sodium (salt):
 - baking powder, baking soda,
 - brine, salt, soy sauce,
 - celery, garlic & onion salt,
 - disodium phosphate,
 - monosodium glutamate (MSG),
 - sodium alginate, sodium benzoate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium bisulfate and sodium propionate.
- ▶ Choose lower sodium foods such as vegetables that are fresh, frozen or canned with no salt added, fruits, milk, fortified soy beverages and yogurt, grains such as barley, quinoa and rice.
- ▶ Compare breads, cereals and crackers to make a lower sodium choice.
- ▶ Canned, boxed and frozen mixed dishes are more likely to be higher in sodium. For example, soups and stews, frozen meals, macaroni and cheese, rice, noodles, pizza, lasagna, refrigerated or frozen entrées and appetizers, frozen potatoes and prepared salads.
- ▶ Buy unseasoned meat, poultry, fish, seafood and tofu. Reduce your intake of processed or prepared meats such as sausages, deli meats, canned meats, chicken wings, burgers and meatballs.
- ▶ Buy low sodium vegetable and tomato juice.
- ▶ Try unsalted nuts.
- ▶ Choose low sodium canned beans. Try dried beans, lentils and peas.
- ▶ Some water softening systems may add sodium to a person’s overall intake.

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL)	
pour 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Calories 110	% Daily Value*
	% valeur quotidienne*
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0%
Saturated / saturés 0 g	
+ Trans / trans 0 g	0%
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0%
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	22%
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 0 mg	0%
Potassium 450 mg	10%
Calcium 30 mg	2%
Iron / Fer 0 mg	0%

*5% or less is a **little**, 15% or more is a **lot**
*5% ou moins c'est **peu**, 15% ou plus c'est **beaucoup**

Here are some more ideas to lower the amount of sodium you eat:

At home:

- ▶ Taste food before you add salt. You may not even need it.
- ▶ Watch out for the sodium in condiments, gravies, sauces and processed cheese products.
- ▶ Use fresh or powdered onion and garlic instead of their salt versions.
- ▶ Use lemon, herbs, spices and flavoured vinegars instead of salt. See the next page for a herb shaker recipe. It's a tasty alternative to the salt shaker.
- ▶ If canned foods, such as vegetables, beans and fish have added salt rinse them under cold water.

Eating away from home:

- ▶ When you eat out ask for less or no salt to be added to your food.
- ▶ Watch for menu items that indicate high sodium such as include "pickled", "smoked", "au jus", "soy sauce", and "in broth."
- ▶ Fast foods often contain much more salt than homemade foods.

For more information on salt/sodium including the different kinds of salt go to www.unlockfood.ca

¹National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2019. Dietary Reference Intakes for sodium and potassium. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.17226/25353> accessed 20200720

²Dietitians of Canada. 2019. Get the Scoop on Salt. <https://www.unlockfood.ca/en/Articles/Heart-Health/Get-the-Scoop-on-Salt.aspx> accessed 20200720

³Health Canada. 2018. Sodium Intake of Canadians in 2017. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/publications/food-nutrition/sodium-intake-canadians-2017.html> accessed 20200720

For more information call
1-800-660-5853
or visit www.healthunit.org



Herb Shaker Recipe



**Try this herb shaker recipe.
It's a tasty alternative to sodium!**



- 2 ml dried basil
- 15 ml dry mustard
- 3 ml white pepper
- 5 ml dried thyme
- 15 ml onion powder
- 1 ml celery seed
- 5-15 ml garlic powder
- 1 ml dried rosemary
- 2 ml paprika

Blend ingredients and add to a few grains of raw rice into an empty shaker for an easier flow.



For more information call 1-800-660-5853
or visit www.healthunit.org

Adapted with the permission of the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit