

# Dangers of Sodium



Americans, on average, consume about twice as much salt as they should each day. From pasta to meat to vegetables, we salt it all. Sodium-filled processed food and fast food are a significant part of many of our diets. Experts are warning us to cut down, but why? Before you reach for the salt shaker, read these facts about sodium and learn about what you can do to limit your intake.

## Why is it bad?

Sodium causes excess fluids to stay in your body, making your heart do more work than it should. Overworking the heart can result in high blood pressure and heart disease. The presence of excess fluid can also result in weight gain.

## How much should I have?

While the average American consumes approximately 4000 to 5000 milligrams per day, the recommended daily allowance is much lower than that. The body only requires about 500 mg of sodium per day, and recommended daily allowance in the United States is 2400mg or less. The American Heart Association even encourages people to try to limit their salt intake to 1500mg per day, which measures out to about a teaspoon.

## Quick tips on how to cut down:

- Eat, then salt. Many people instinctively add salt to their food without even tasting it first. Make sure that if you're adding salt to your meal, it actually needs it.
- Switch to pepper. It doesn't taste the same, but black pepper adds flavor and is much healthier than table salt. If you can't stomach pepper, try other herbs and spices.
- Taste test. If your food tastes like salt, it is too salty. Eat something else!
- Eat at home. When you go to a restaurant, you never know exactly what is going into your food. Restaurant food, especially of the fast food variety, has notoriously high sodium levels. If you cook at home, you can control the ingredients and limit the amount of salt that goes into your meal.
- Skip the process. Packaged, processed foods often contain a great deal of salt, so avoiding them is advisable. If you choose to continue to eat these foods, always read the label to check how much salt the foods contain.

- Keep track. Make sure you know how much salt you're consuming each day. Estimating is tough, so read labels and avoid sodium whenever you can.

Source: [http://www.recipe4living.com/articles/the\\_dangers\\_of\\_sodium.htm](http://www.recipe4living.com/articles/the_dangers_of_sodium.htm)