

# Reduced Salt

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**Leaflet provided by:**

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## What is salt?

Salt is made up of sodium and chloride. Salt is the major source of sodium in our diet. It is the sodium part of this chemical which is harmful to health.

Most people in the UK consume more salt than is required. The reason why our intake of salt is too high is because many people are not aware that salt is hidden in lots of foods. In fact, 75% of our salt intake comes from salt added to everyday foods such as cereals, soup, ready meals, snacks and processed meats.

Only 25% of our salt intake comes from salt added at the table or in cooking. It is therefore easy to eat too much salt without adding any yourself!

## Why do I need to lower my salt intake?

Too much salt in your diet increases your blood pressure and the amount of fluid retained in your body. High blood pressure increases the risk of developing heart disease and strokes. High blood pressure can also lead to further kidney damage.

## What are the benefits of reducing my salt intake?

- Helps to lower your blood pressure
- Helps to prevent fluid retention
- Helps to reduce the feeling of thirst, which is helpful if you are on a fluid restriction.

## How much salt can I eat?

In the UK today, we eat an average of 9-12g of salt a day. Current guidelines recommend that we should have a **maximum of 6g of salt per day** (2.4g sodium). This is the equivalent to just one teaspoon of salt a day.

### The following practical tips will help you to cut down the salt in your diet:

- Do not add salt to your food. Remember that other types of salt e.g. rock salt and sea salt are no different and have no health benefits. You may use a pinch of salt in cooking.
- To start with, food may taste bland; however, it does not take long for your taste buds to lose the taste for salt. Flavour your foods with herbs, spices, garlic and lemon instead of salt (see the “alternative flavourings” section to follow)
- Use fewer tinned, packaged and processed foods. Keep processed foods, such as dried packet mixes, soups and sauces or tinned soups, dehydrated meals e.g. cup a soup, pot noodles or packet rice meals and manufactured products, e.g. meat pies, beef burgers to a minimum.
- Limit bacon, ham, sausages, corned beef, tinned meat, tongue, meat or fish pastes, pates and luncheon meat. Choose fresh “off the bone” deli roast cuts of meat such as chicken, turkey, beef, pork, or lamb where possible.
- Avoid smoked meat or fish.
- Avoid salty snacks such as crisps, salted nuts and salted crackers
- Bottled sauces (e.g. soy sauce, tomato sauce, brown sauce) and high salt flavour enhancers (e.g. stock cubes, gravy granules) can be used sparingly.
- Remember, foods tinned in brine means that they are tinned in salt water. Look for foods tinned in spring water or oil instead.
- Opt for fresh or frozen vegetables instead of tinned. If buying tinned vegetables, choose those tinned in water only.
- Choose homemade soup instead of tinned or packet soup.
- Try not to have more than two servings (e.g. 2 matchbox size pieces) of hard cheese per week. Cottage cheese and cream cheese tend to be lower in salt.
- Avoid salt substitutes such as Lo Salt, Selora, Biosalt, Pansalt and Ruthmol. These are also high in potassium and are therefore not suitable if you have kidney problems.

<sup>1</sup> **These products listed in the table below should be limited if you have been advised to follow a low potassium diet**

<sup>2</sup> **These products listed in the table below should be avoided or limited if you have been advised to follow a low phosphate diet.**

| Food Group   | Foods to limit   | Foods allowed  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Bread &amp; cereals</b><br>If you have diabetes, avoid sugary cereals | <p>All Bran<sup>1,2</sup>, Branflakes<sup>2</sup>, Salted porridge</p> <p>Salted popcorn</p> <p>Salted biscuits or crackers, e.g. Ritz, Tuc, <b>oat cakes</b>, salted rice cakes</p> <p>Packet pasta, savoury rice, instant/pot noodles, tinned spaghetti<sup>1</sup>, ravioli</p> <p>Instant cous cous</p>                    | <p>Breakfast cereals, e.g. cornflakes, Special K, Weetabix, rice Krispies, Shredded Wheat, unsalted porridge oats</p> <p>Limit bread to 4 slices per day. Try thin sliced or a small loaf e.g. Weight Watchers, Danish, Hovis.</p> <p>Bread rolls, pitta bread, chapatis</p> <p>Currant loaf<sup>1</sup>, teacakes<sup>1</sup>, scones<sup>2</sup>, malt loaf<sup>1</sup>, muffins and plain biscuits e.g. rich tea, marie or arrowroot, cream biscuits, popcorn (unsalted)</p> <p>Potato cakes<sup>1</sup>, crackers (unsalted), rice cakes (unsalted)</p> <p>Dried or fresh pasta, rice and noodles</p> <p>Cous cous</p> <p>Pastry</p> |
| <b>Milk &amp; dairy products</b>   | <p>Limit cheese (hard, processed, continental, cheese spread) to two matchbox servings a week</p>  | <p>Milk<sup>1,2</sup>, cream<sup>2</sup>, crème fraiche</p> <p>Cream cheese<sup>2</sup> and cottage cheese<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Low fat fruit yoghurt<sup>1,2</sup>/natural yoghurt<sup>1,2</sup>/fromage frais<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>Butter and margarine (choose unsalted varieties if possible)</p> <p>Vanilla ice cream<sup>2</sup></p>  |
| <b>Meat, fish &amp; eggs</b>   | <p><b>Meat</b></p> <p>Processed and tinned meat e.g. corned beef, ham and tongue</p> <p>Smoked meats e.g. ham, bacon</p> <p>Pate<sup>2</sup> and meat paste</p> <p>Limit “unsmoked” or “reduced salt” bacon to once a week.</p> <p>Sausages, burgers, pies, pasties and black pudding.</p> <p>Convenience/ready-made meals</p> | <p><b>Meat</b></p> <p>Lamb, beef, pork, chicken, turkey, duck, liver<sup>2</sup>, tripe<sup>2</sup> (fresh or frozen)</p> <p>Choose cooked meats, e.g. chicken, turkey, beef, lamb ‘off the bone’ from the deli counter or the butcher</p> <p><b>Fish</b></p> <p>Fresh or frozen white fish e.g. cod, haddock</p> <p>Fresh or frozen oily fish<sup>2</sup> e.g. mackerel, salmon, pilchards, fresh</p>   |

|                             |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
|                             | <p>(check labelling)</p> <p><b>Fish</b></p> <p>Smoked fish, e.g. kippers<sup>2</sup>, and yellow haddock</p> <p>Shellfish<sup>2</sup> e.g. prawns<sup>2</sup>, shrimps and scampi<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Fish paste</p> <p>Tinned fish in brine e.g. sardines<sup>2</sup>, tuna</p> | <p>tuna</p> <p>Fish in breadcrumbs/batter, fish fingers, fish cakes (check the salt content on the food label)</p> <p>Tinned fish in spring water or sunflower oil (drained).</p> <p>Eggs<sup>2</sup></p> |
| <b>Fruit and vegetables</b> | <p>Tinned vegetables in salt</p> <p>Olives and other vegetables in brine</p> <p>Fruit and vegetables should be limited to 4 portions per day if following a low potassium diet</p>  | <p>All fresh and frozen vegetables. (Boil all potatoes and vegetables if you are on a low potassium diet)</p> <p>Tinned vegetables in water labelled “no added salt”</p> <p>All fruit</p>                 |
| <b>Drinks</b>               | <p>Tinned and bottled vegetable juice e.g. tomato juice<sup>1</sup></p>   | <p>Tea, fruit and herbal teas, coffee<sup>1</sup></p> <p>Hot chocolate<sup>1, 2</sup>, fruit juice<sup>1</sup>, cordials</p> <p>Fizzy drinks/waters</p> <p>Alcohol within the Government guidelines</p>   |

## Alternative Flavourings

Fresh or dried herbs and spices can be used to add a wide variety of flavours to food. The following guide gives ideas for their use:

- **Basil** – Best with tomato, mushroom, cheese and egg dishes. Sprinkle chopped fresh or dry basil as a garnish or use towards the end of cooking.
- **Bay Leaves/Bouquet Garni** – A strong flavouring for stews, sauces, gravies, meat and poultry casseroles.
- **Chives** – A much milder version of the onion with little aftertaste. Very good chopped up in cottage cheese, omelettes and scrambled eggs.
- **Dill** – Can be used raw or at the end of cooking fish e.g. salmon and new potatoes
- **Fennel** – Use in fish recipes or over cucumber salads or soup. Good in humous and pulse dishes
- **Garlic** – Use the clove only. Do not use garlic salt. Add to any savoury dishes. The clove is best crushed to flavour salads and meat. A small quantity will heighten existing flavours
- **Mint** – Make mint sauce or add to water when cooking vegetables or potatoes

- **Oregano/Marjoram** – Use with roast lamb, chicken, eggs, fish, stews and omelettes
- **Parsley** - Enhances most flavours. Use in soups and stews, with meat, fish, vegetables, sauces, casseroles and stuffing
- **Rosemary** – Strong and aromatic. Use when roasting lamb, chicken, or potatoes, with grilled chops, stews, stuffing and white cabbage
- **Sage** – Strong and aromatic. Use in stews and pork dishes.
- **Tarragon** – Bitter sweet. Use small amounts with chicken, fish and tomatoes or add to salad dressings.
- **Thyme** – Strong. Add to lamb, pork, cottage cheese, omelettes, salads and stuffing.
- **Allspice** - Add ground allspice to ham dishes, curries, meat loaves and sweet potatoes. Add whole allspice to boiled meats, pot roasts, soups and bean dishes.
- **Cayenne Pepper** – Made from chilli. Use in curries, vegetables, and cheese dishes.
- **Coriander** – Use in curries, stews and pickles.
- **Cumin** – Use in curries or add to lamb, aubergines and yoghurt.
- **Nutmeg** – Add to mashed potatoes, vegetables, egg dishes and chicken
- **Paprika** – A mild, bright red pepper. Adds sharpness and colour to meat, fish and vegetables. Use as a garnish for pale-coloured dishes.
- **Pepper** – Black pepper is more flavoursome than white pepper but less powerful. Use over vegetables and in stews.
- **Turmeric** – Use powdered turmeric in curries or when boiling rice to give it an appealing yellow colour.
- **Mustard Powder** – Mix with water and spread on steak or chops when grilling.
- **Lemon Juice and Vinegar** – Small amounts bring out the flavour of green vegetables. Use to make salad dressings.
- Use apple sauce on sandwiches e.g. pork
- Mint jelly and cranberry sauce can be used to accompany chicken and lamb
- Pickled onions are lower in salt than other pickles
- In general, Thai and Italian sauces contain less salt than Chinese and Mexican sauces.
- Squeeze lemon juice onto fish or seafood
- Add white wine to risottos and sauces for chicken.
- Use garlic, ginger, chilli and lime in stir fries.

## Reduced Salt Snack Ideas

- Fruit
- Biscuits (e.g. Rich tea, jammie dodgers, wafer biscuits, custard creams, shortbread)
- Plain, unsalted crackers
- Cake (e.g. Victoria sponge, Madeira, Angel cake, Swiss Roll)
- Cereal (except bran cereals)
- Toast (maximum of 4 slices of bread per day)
- Sandwiches (e.g. fresh/roast meat or chicken, cream cheese, egg, tuna, tinned fish in water e.g. tuna, jam, honey, lemon curd)
- Plain/unsalted Rice Cakes
- Fromage frais or yoghurts
- Unsalted nuts<sup>1, 2</sup>
- Boiled sweets, fruit pastilles, wine gums
- Unsalted popcorn
- Jelly
- Plain/unsalted popcorn
- Handful of vegetable sticks, e.g. pepper, carrots, cucumber
- Cereal bar

## Reduced Salt/Low Salt Products

Many supermarkets now stock “reduced salt” ranges of foods and drinks.

It is important to check the labelling and take caution as they may contain salt substitutes e.g. Lo Salt, Selora, Biosalt, Pansalt and Ruthmol. These are all high in potassium and are not suitable.

## Food Labelling - Always check the label!

### 1. Look at the Nutritional Information

If you regularly check the nutrition information on food labels it can help you to choose healthier lower salt options. Some foods can contain nearly the daily-recommended amount i.e. 6g, in just one serving! Check claims such as “low in salt” with care. A bag of crisps that claims to contain 25% less salt than normal crisps may still contain a lot of salt.

Look at the figure for salt per 100g as this will give you an idea of whether it is high in salt. Some labels also give the figure for salt as sodium.

**High** = more than 1.5g salt per 100g (or 0.6g sodium per 100g)

**Low** = 0.3g salt or less per 100g (or 0.1g sodium per 100g)

If the amount of salt or sodium is between these figures then that is a medium level of salt.

## **Traffic light labels**

Some foods produced may have “traffic light” colours on the front of the packet usually for salt, sugar and fat. This is to try and help you to choose healthier options.

**Red** = high, only eat small amounts or occasionally

**Amber** = medium, therefore eat in moderation

**Green** = healthier choice

Many of the foods with traffic light colours on them will have a mixture of colours, so try to go for more greens and ambers and fewer reds.

If the label says that the product contains a “trace” amount of sodium, it means it contains minimal amounts of sodium and is therefore suitable to have.

## 2. **Check the ingredients**

Sodium is not only found in salt but also in a variety of other forms. So when checking ingredients, look out for salt, sodium chloride, sodium nitrite, sodium nitrate, and monosodium glutamate (MSG).

Dietitian:.....

Number:.....



### **If you require a special edition of this leaflet**

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on audio tape or disk and in other languages on request. Please contact:

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