

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

How to eat less salt

This information is suitable for anyone who wants to reduce their salt intake, including people with kidney disease.

Too much salt in our diet can cause problems such as water retention and high blood pressure which can increase the risk of stroke, heart disease and kidney problems.

The average British diet contains too much salt. It is recommended that adults eat no more than 6g of salt (one level teaspoon) per day to help reduce the risks of these health problems.

Did you know “75% of the salt we eat has already been added to the food we buy, 10% we add ourselves in cooking or at the table, and 15% occurs naturally in foods”

Three steps to help you cut down on salt:-

1. Reduce the amount of salt you add to food
2. Eat salty foods less frequently
3. Check food labels so you can purchase healthier, lower salt, choices

Step 1: Reduce the amount of salt you add to food

- If you are adding salt to your food then try to gradually reduce the amount you use until you have cut it out altogether. Remember to taste food first - many people add salt at the table out of habit.
- Try to use less salt when cooking or avoid adding it at all if possible. Over time your taste buds will adapt to less salt.
- Instead of using salt try adding flavour to your food with the salt-free flavour boosters



‘Salt-Free’ Flavour Boosters
Pepper Add to any savoury dish for added heat and flavour
Basil Instead of salting tomatoes why not boost the flavour with fresh basil and a drizzle of balsamic vinegar
Rosemary Add to chicken, lamb or vegetables before roasting
Bouquet Garni or bay leaves Use in stocks, soups and stews
Balsamic/Red/White/Cider/Malt Vinegars Try making a dressing with balsamic vinegar, olive oil and dried thyme to use when roasting chicken and vegetables in a tray bake Balsamic glaze can be drizzled over salads and pasta dishes
Garlic Use fresh garlic cloves, not garlic salt Use in meat dishes, pasta sauces and salad dressings Roast whole in skins with potato wedges for extra flavour
Ginger Combines well with garlic for double the flavour A classic Chinese combination is ginger, garlic and onions with a splash of sesame oil
Mint Make your own classic mint sauce with fresh mint and malt vinegar Or use half malt, half balsamic vinegar for a twist and add to your lamb dishes

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Chop fresh mint with other herbs such as parsley & coriander to boost the flavour of rice or couscous salads

Mash fresh chopped mint into garden peas with some fresh yogurt or crème fraiche

Add some fresh chopped mint leave to boiled potatoes or vegetables on serving

Parsley

Great added to soups, stew and fish dishes

Oregano, basil, mixed herbs

Add dried or fresh to casseroles of chicken, red meat or fish

Fresh herbs finely chopped and mixed with olive oil and lemon juice makes a herb dip or sauce to serve with fresh meat or fish

Lemon or lime juice

Squeeze over fish and chicken dishes

Place squeezed lemons inside a chicken with chopped onions before roasting for a juicy roast

Lime juice can be really useful in Asian, Thai and Mexican cooking

Chillies, chilli powder, crushed chillies, smoked paprika and cayenne pepper

Use to make chilli con carne, spicy pasta dishes, curries and goulash

Curry powder, turmeric, cumin, coriander, garam masala, paprika

Use in chilli con carne, curries and north African cooking to produce a variety of flavours and colour

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Step 2: Eat salty foods less frequently

The following table may help you identify foods that are high in salt and help you find lower salt alternatives:

Try to cut down on:-	Lower salt alternatives:-
Tinned, smoked and processed meats e.g. bacon, gammon, sausage, beef burgers, luncheon meat, corned beef, tongue, ham pate, salami, chorizo, pies and pasties.	Use fresh or frozen meat e.g. beef, lamb, pork and poultry. When choosing cold meats, try cold roast pork, chicken, beef or turkey.
Smoked fish e.g. kippers, smoked haddock.	Use fresh, frozen or fish tinned in water or oil
Hard and processed cheese e.g. Cheddar, Cheshire and cheese spreads, or any dishes containing a lot of cheese sauce.	Cream cheese, ricotta, mozzarella and cottage cheese.
Tinned and packet soups, cup-a-soup and 'pot snacks'.	Try homemade soup with a small amount of reduced salt stock cube. Couscous or noodles with leftover meat or fish and salad can be a quick and easy alternative to a pot snack.
Sauces and condiments e.g. ketchup, brown sauce, mayonnaise, salad cream and pickles Cook-in sauces and stir fry sauces Stock cubes, yeast or meat extracts	Use small amounts, infrequently, as they all contain salt. Use tinned tomatoes with herbs (fresh or dried) and garlic to make pasta sauces. Or try cream or wine based sauces and flavour with pepper and herbs. Homemade stock is easy to make and very low in salt if no additional salt is added.

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<p>Soy or fish sauce</p>	<p>For gravy use small amounts of gravy granules or Bisto powder.</p> <p>Use reduced salt soy and smaller amounts of fish sauce (see flavouring boosters for alternative</p>
<p>Salted savoury snacks e.g. salted nuts, crisps, salted biscuits e.g. Tuc, Cheddars, Bombay mix.</p>	<p>Unsalted nuts, unsalted crisps e.g. Tyrells naked crisps supermarkets own crisps with salt sachet removed, plain bread sticks, unsalted popcorn, rice cakes, water biscuits, matzo crackers, melba toast</p>
<p>Take-away meals e.g. pizza especially with ham or pepperoni, Chinese, curry or burger style fast food & eating out</p>	<p>Margarita or vegetable pizza, jacket potato with tuna or cottage cheese, unsalted fish & chips.</p> <p>If possible ask for food to be cooked without salt or mono-sodium glutamate being added.</p>
<p>Breakfast cereals often have large amounts of hidden salt e.g. corn flakes, bran flakes, All-Bran and Rice Krispies</p> <p>Try to avoid cereals with more than 0.6g salt/100g</p>	<p>No added salt varieties e.g. shredded wheat (most varieties), some crunchy oat cereals (check label), porridge, muesli, Ready Brek, and puffed wheat.</p> <p>Moderate salt varieties e.g. Weetabix Weetabix minis, some whole grain 'hoop' cereals and brands of oat flakes.</p>
<p>Bread and baked goods can contain large amounts of hidden salt.</p> <p>Try to avoid breads with more than 1.1g salt per 100g or more than 0.4g salt per slice.</p>	<p>Alternatively, try making your own bread and reduce the amount of salt used in the recipe.</p>

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Step 3: Check food labels when shopping

Reading food labels will help you to select a food or brand of food that is the lowest in salt.

Traffic Light system (front of pack food labelling)

The government's recommended "traffic light" system helps consumers to understand, at a glance if the food has high, medium or low amounts of fat, saturated fat, sugars and **salt** by using the following colour code:

Colour code	Salt content
Green	Low. Eat freely.
Amber	Medium. Try to limit.
Red	High. Eat occasionally.

Nutrition labels on the back or side of packaging:

If you read the food labels in more detail, the following table can be used as a guide

What's a lot of salt	What's a little salt
If labelled as 1.5g or more per 100g	If labelled as 0.3g salt or less per 100g

Try to limit the amount of processed and takeaway foods eaten. Try to have homemade food where possible or check food labels to choose lower salt options. A main meal should ideally contain less than 2g salt.

Remember rock salt, sea salt, pink Himalayan salt, garlic salt and vegetable salt are still forms of salt which should be avoided where possible.

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Salt substitutes still contain a significant amount of salt and are not recommended as they do not help you to become accustomed to having small amounts of salt in the diet. This can be dangerous to people with kidney disease.

Useful resources

- www.actiononsalt.org.uk
- www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/Salt
- www.bhf.org.uk
- www.bhsoc.org
- www.bloodpressureuk.org
- www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/cut-down-salt.aspx

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Document History	
Department:	Dietetics
Contact:	26161
Updated:	June 2020
Review:	June 2023
Version:	6.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/469/07