Healthy Eating

Salt

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When you’re trying to make a healthy choice, for most people the aim should be to eat more fruit and vegetables, and starchy foods such as bread, pasta and rice. And cut down on fat (especially saturates), salt and sugar.

Why should I cut down on salt?

Eating too much salt could raise blood pressure. And high blood pressure, sometimes called hypertension, increases the risk of stroke and coronary heart disease. So it’s important to try to avoid foods that contain a lot of salt.

It’s actually the sodium in salt that is thought to affect blood pressure, and most of the sodium in our diet comes from salt – 6g salt contain about 2g sodium.

How do I cut down?

Three-quarters of the salt we eat comes from processed food – such as tinned or packet soups and ready-prepared meals – so make sure you check the labels to find those with less added salt. Here are some other practical ways to cut down:

- Add less salt to your cooking.
- Get out of the habit of adding salt to your food at the table (try to remember to taste it first).
- Cut down on salty snacks such as crisps and nuts, and heavily salted foods such as bacon, cheese, pickles, smoked fish and many ready-prepared meals.

- Choose canned vegetables and pulses that are marked no added salt.
- Choose lower-salt stock cubes, make your own or add more herbs and spices for flavour instead.
- Cut down on sauces, especially soy sauce, because these are usually very high in salt.

How much salt should I be eating each day?

On average, people are eating about 9g salt or about 2 teaspoonsfuls (which is about 3.5g sodium) a day. But we should be eating less than 6g salt a day (which is about 2g sodium).

What is a lot or a little?

If you want to make a healthy choice when you’re choosing which products to buy, you might find it useful to check the nutrition information on the label.

You’ll see figures for the sodium content on many food labels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>This is A LOT of sodium</th>
<th>0.5g sodium or more per 100g</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is A LITTLE sodium</td>
<td>0.1g sodium or less per 100g</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the quantities fall between these figures, this is a moderate amount of sodium.