

Too much salt is harmful to your health

slash
the
SALT



Most of us eat too much salt

A diet high in salt increases the risk of high blood pressure, a leading cause of stroke. It also increases the risk of heart disease and other health problems.

Salt is sodium chloride – and it's the sodium in salt that can be bad for your health.

What to watch for ...

As much as 75% of the salt we eat can come from processed and takeaway foods. So while it's good to cut down on the amount of salt we use in cooking and at the table, we also need to be careful about the salt in the foods we buy.

At the supermarket, head for the fresh-food departments. Fresh foods (fruit, vegetables, eggs, meat, fish, unsalted nuts, and milk) are generally lower in salt than processed foods.

Buying packaged foods? Most of these have a Nutrition Information Panel that lets you check the food's sodium levels.

Food is **low** in salt if it has **less than 120mg (milligrams) of sodium per 100g (grams)** of food.



How to check for sodium levels in packaged foods

Below is a Nutrition Information Panel from a can of whole-kernel corn.

Servings per package: 3 Serving size: 80g

	Quantity per serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	290kj	360kj
Protein	3.0g	3.7g
Fat, total	1.0g	1.2g
- saturated	0.1g	0.1g
Carbohydrate	10.5g	13.1g
- sugars	2.7g	3.4g
Dietary fibre	2.9g	3.6g
Sodium	95mg	115mg
Potassium	270mg	335mg

To check the amount of sodium:

- find the “Quantity per 100g” column (highlighted in blue)
- find “Sodium” (highlighted in blue)
- check the sodium figure in the “Quantity per 100g” column: it’s **115mg** (highlighted in blue)

This product is a good low-salt choice: it contains less than 120mg of sodium per 100g.

If you can’t find a food that contains less than 120mg of sodium per 100g, compare the Nutrition Information Panels on different brands and choose the one with the lowest sodium. Even a small difference helps you cut down on salt, especially if it’s a food you eat a lot.

Salt guide

Use these guidelines to choose lower-salt foods:



Recommended daily salt intake

The maximum daily amount of salt recommended for adult New Zealanders is about 6g (2300mg sodium). That's about 1 teaspoon from all food sources. Less is better, especially if you're managing high blood pressure.

Many everyday foods are not low-salt but we still like to eat them. If you choose to eat these foods, try to reduce your salt intake from other foods.

Think about how much of each food you eat. Even with lower-salt foods, the more you eat of those foods the more salt you'll be consuming.



Salt in everyday foods

Salt (sodium) is found in some of our best-loved foods – so it's easy to eat more than 6g (2300mg sodium) a day.

Because we eat large quantities of **bread**, it's a major source of salt in our diets. Choose wholemeal or wholegrain breads – they're generally lower in salt. Use the Nutrition Information Panel to find the bread with the lowest sodium content per 100g.

Limit **processed meats** (ham, bacon, sausages, luncheon), **smoked foods**, and foods in **brine** (salty water). They're generally very high in salt.

Tomato sauces, chutneys, marinades, instant noodles and **soy sauces** also pack a salt punch. Products vary a lot from brand to brand, so check the Nutrition Information Panel.

Fast food and **takeaways** are often laden with salt.

If you eat them on one day of the week, watch your salt intake for the rest of that week.



Use this checklist to help you pick lower-salt (sodium) options:

Bread	Less than 450mg sodium per 100g
Breakfast cereals	Less than 400mg sodium per 100g
Table spreads	Less than 400mg sodium per 100g
Crackers	Less than 350mg sodium per 100g

Tips for reducing your salt intake

- Eat fresh foods.
- Check the Nutrition Information Panel of packaged foods – choose lower-sodium items. This is especially important for foods you eat often (such as breads, breakfast cereals, processed meats).
- Cut back on fast food and other takeaways ... avoid adding salt to chips.
- Use herbs, spices and other seasonings instead of salt ... during cooking *and* at the table.

