

# SHAKIN' Sodium

Sodium is a nutrient needed by the body for a number of reasons.

*Our body needs sodium to help regulate fluids, blood pressure, and heart activity, as well as to help keep our muscles and nerves functioning properly.*

**Na**  
SODIUM

23

Sodium can be found in table salt, also known as sodium chloride, and many other foods. Table salt contains 40% sodium. For example, one teaspoon contains six grams of salt. Six grams of salt contains 2400 mg of sodium. This amount is nearly double the recommended daily intake for an average adult.

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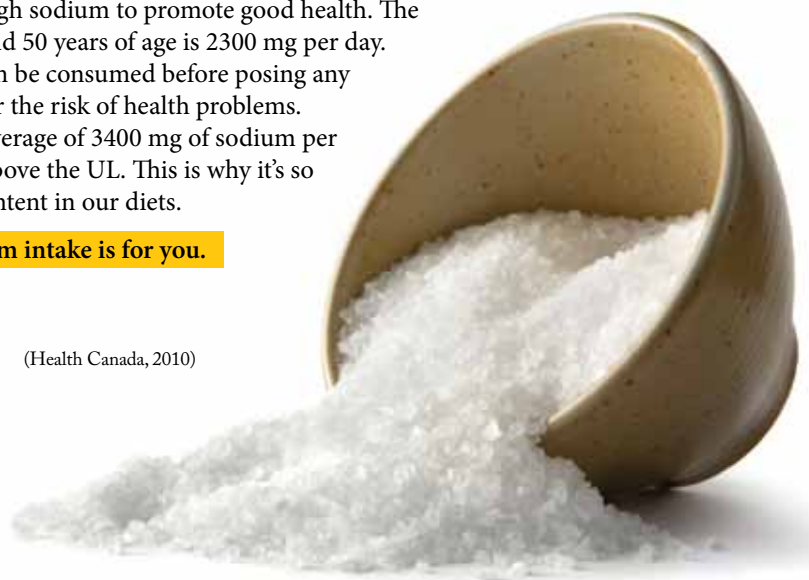
Sodium can occur naturally in foods, but it's most often added to food for flavour, texture, or to help ensure food safety. In fact, only 12% of the sodium in our diet occurs naturally in foods whereas 77% of sodium is added to foods during manufacturing and processing. The remaining 11% is added at the table or during the cooking process (Health Canada, 2010). The main food sources of sodium are baked goods (e.g., breads, muffins, buns, biscuits), processed meats (e.g., lunch meats, smoked fish), vegetable juices, canned foods (e.g., soups, vegetables), cheese (e.g., cheddar, feta, processed cheese slices or spreads), gravies, sauces, pizza, frozen dinners, ready-to-eat cereals, potato chips, and salty snacks.

Most of us eat more sodium than we need. The Adequate Intake (AI) for Canadians between 9 and 50 years of age is 1500 mg per day. The AI is what is deemed to be enough sodium to promote good health. The Tolerable Upper Intake Limit (UL) for Canadians between 9 and 50 years of age is 2300 mg per day. The UL is considered the maximum amount of sodium that can be consumed before posing any adverse health effects. The more the UL is exceeded, the greater the risk of health problems. According to Health Canada (2010), Canadians consume an average of 3400 mg of sodium per day which is more than twice the recommended AI and well above the UL. This is why it's so important for all of us to work toward reducing the sodium content in our diets.

See the chart below to find out what the recommended sodium intake is for you.

AGE	AI Recommended per day	UL Maximum per day
1 to 3 years	1000 mg	1500 mg
4 to 8 years	1200 mg	1900 mg
9 to 50 years	1500 mg	2300 mg
51 to 70 years	1300 mg	2300 mg
Over 70 years	1200 mg	2300 mg

(Health Canada, 2010)





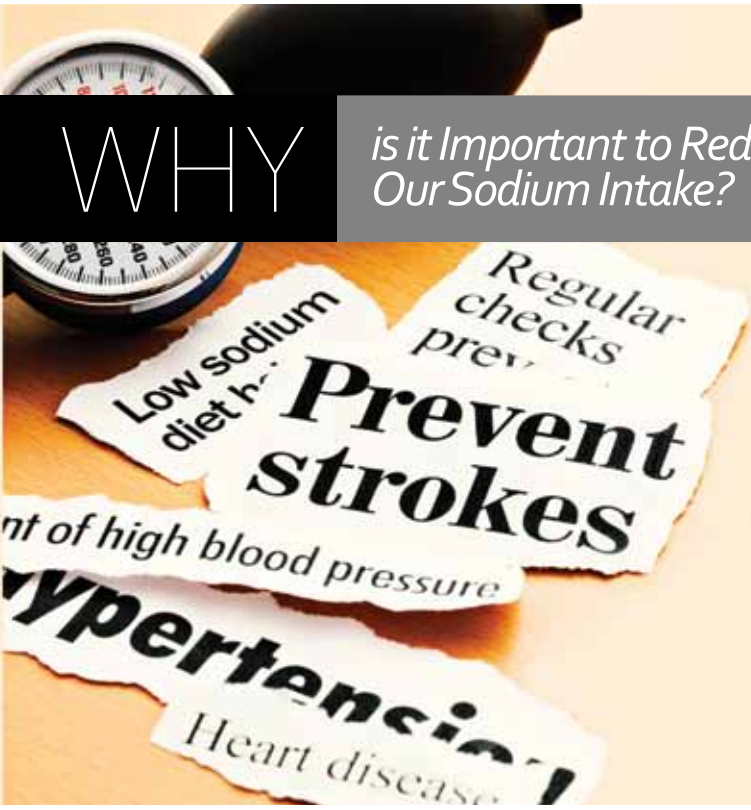
HIGH SODIUM ISN'T JUST AN ISSUE FOR ADULTS. **CHILDREN ARE AT RISK TOO.** MANUFACTURED FOOD PRODUCTS TARGETED AT YOUNG CHILDREN (i.e., one to three years) CAN BE HIGH IN SODIUM.



For example, a serving of Graduates® For Toddlers Lil' Meals™ White Turkey Stew with Rice and Vegetables contains 470 mg of sodium. That's almost half the AI for this age group! Children who consume foods high in sodium are likely to develop a taste for salty foods later in life and, possibly, high blood pressure as a child.

## WHY

*is it Important to Reduce Our Sodium Intake?*



Sodium is needed to help regulate a number of functions in the body. The kidneys work to balance the amount of sodium needed. When there is too much sodium, the kidneys will get rid of the excess in urine. But if the kidneys can't remove all the excess sodium, it gets stored in the blood, leading to increased blood volume. As a result of the increase in blood volume, the heart must work harder to pump the blood through the blood vessels. Over time, the pressure in the arteries increases the risk for high blood pressure.

In addition to high blood pressure, there are a number of chronic diseases that can result from long-term high intakes of sodium. For example, high sodium intake has been linked to stroke, cardiovascular disease, increased risk of stomach cancer, and asthma (Health Canada, 2010).

It's been estimated that 23 500 cardiovascular disease events per year could be prevented if Canadians were to reduce their sodium intake to 1800 mg per day. This would equate to a savings of approximately \$2.99 billion per year in direct and indirect health care costs (Health Canada, 2010).

## HOW

*Can I Reduce My Daily Intake of Sodium?*

Many of us eat more sodium than we need. The good news is that there are many things you can do to reduce your intake. Find out what the recommended sodium AI and UL is for your age group (see page 1). For optimal health benefits, aim to meet the AI. If this is difficult, try not to exceed the UL on a daily basis.

### EAT WELL WITH CANADA'S FOOD GUIDE

Eat more fresh, unprocessed foods. Choose vegetables and fruits more often as they're higher in potassium and lower in sodium. Many foods prepared at grocery stores, fast food chains, and restaurants are high in sodium. Limit prepackaged foods and meals purchased outside of the home. Instead, cook at home with fresh foods to help control how much sodium you eat. For example, skip the store bought pasta sauce and try making homemade sauce with fresh tomatoes, herbs, and spices.

### READ THE NUTRITION LABELS ON PRODUCTS

Almost all prepackaged foods have a Nutrition Facts table showing how much sodium it contains per serving. Reading the labels will help you make informed decisions on your food choices. Look for items in the ingredient list such as monosodium glutamate (MSG), brine, baking soda, baking powder, or soy sauce. These ingredients are high in sodium. The closer to the top of the list these ingredients are, the more sodium the food will have. Remember to check the serving size and the percent daily value (%DV). Choose foods that contain less than 10% DV of sodium or you can also refer to the Amount of Sodium Per Serving Size chart on the right for general guidelines.



AMOUNT OF SODIUM PER SERVING

400 mg or greater  
**TOO MUCH**

200 to 400 mg  
**BE CAREFUL**

0 to 200 mg  
**OKAY**

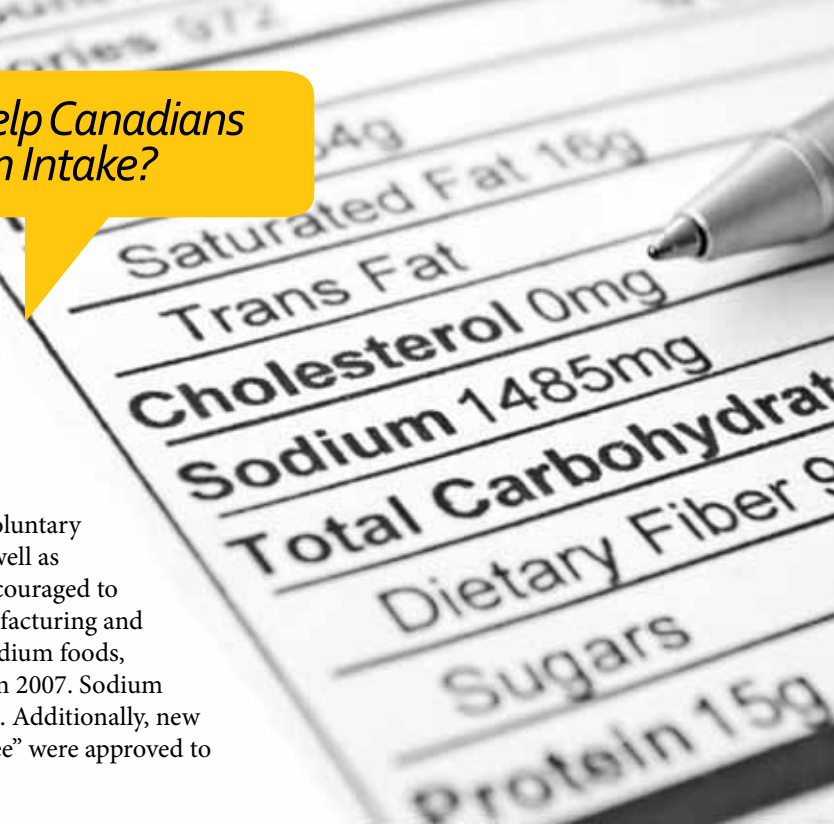
(Adapted from [www.sodium101.org](http://www.sodium101.org))

# WHAT

## is Being Done to Help Canadians Lower Their Sodium Intake?

Given that more than 75% of the sodium Canadians consume is added during food manufacturing and processing, it was necessary for the government to take action. With this in mind, Health Canada formed a Sodium Working Group. The goal of this group is to reduce the population average intake of sodium to 2300 mg per day (UL) by 2016. The long term goal of this group would be to get 95% of the population to below the UL on a daily basis.

To achieve this, the workgroup is implementing and monitoring a voluntary sodium reduction strategy for manufacturers of processed foods as well as food service providers. As part of the strategy, manufacturers are encouraged to reduce the amount of sodium added to their food during food manufacturing and processing. To support consumers in their ability to choose lower sodium foods, mandatory nutrition labelling for prepackaged foods was launched in 2007. Sodium must be listed as one of the 13 nutrients on the Nutrition Facts Table. Additionally, new guidelines for food label claims such as “low in sodium” and “salt-free” were approved to help consumers choose lower sodium products.



### LOOK FOR SODIUM CLAIMS

When trying to decide which foods to purchase, look for foods that display one of the following food label claims: salt-free, low in sodium, lower in sodium, no added salt, or lightly salted. Each of these food label claims has a specific meaning regarding its sodium content as outlined in the chart below.

WHAT THE LABEL SAYS...	WHAT THE LABEL MEANS...
Free of sodium or salt, salt-free, without salt, contains no sodium	Has less than 5 mg of sodium or salt per serving
Low in sodium or salt, low source of sodium or salt	Has less than 140 mg of sodium per serving
Reduced sodium or salt, lower in sodium or salt, less salt	Has 25% less sodium than the same regular food product
No added sodium or salt, without added sodium, unsalted	Has no added salt or other ingredients that contain sodium (this doesn't mean there's no sodium as the sodium could be naturally occurring)
Lightly salted	Has 50% less sodium than the same regular food product

(Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 2011)

### DINING OUT

When dining out, review the nutrition information before placing your order, if available. Ask questions on how the meal is prepared and ask if they can make changes. For example, ask if the food can be prepared with no added sodium (e.g., MSG, soy sauce, salt). Choose foods that are not processed (e.g., grilled chicken breast instead of chicken fingers). Ask for sauces to come on the side and use sparingly. Split the entrée with a friend or take the rest home with you. You can even ask for the salt shaker to be removed from the dining table to reduce the temptation.

### AVOID ADDING TABLE SALT TO FOODS

Salt is not needed to make food taste better. In fact, too much salt may actually mask the flavour of your food. Instead, use herbs to add flavour. Be creative and experiment with some of the following suggestions to add flavour when cooking:

### SUGGESTIONS TO ADD FLAVOUR INSTEAD OF SALT

BEEF	mustard powder, sage, thyme, rosemary, garlic, nutmeg, curry powder
CHICKEN	lemon, garlic, paprika, ginger, sage, thyme, basil, tarragon, rosemary
FISH	bay leaf, curry powder, mustard powder, lemon, paprika, dill, lemongrass, ginger
RICE	chives, green pepper, onion, cinnamon, paprika, cumin, bay leaf
POTATO	onion, garlic, parsley, chives



Eat Right Ontario (2011)

# Make it Happen

## AT YOUR WORKPLACE

HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE REDUCING SODIUM INTAKE AT YOUR WORKPLACE:

- Ensure that you have a healthy meetings policy in force that includes low sodium recommendations for food choices. If you don't have a healthy meetings policy, look into getting one.
- Provide a display with resources to build awareness on the importance of reducing sodium intake on a daily basis.
- Offer a presentation or lunch and learn workshop with a Registered Dietitian to provide the facts about sodium, as well as tips and tricks on how to lower your intake.
- Ensure that vending machines have at least one lower sodium choice for each regular sodium item.



# KNOW

STROKE

**REFERENCES:**  
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Health Canada (2008). *It's your health: sodium*. Retrieved on July 4, 2011, from [http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt\\_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vs/v/food-aliment/sodium\\_eng.pdf](http://hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/alt_formats/pacrb-dgapcr/pdf/iyh-vs/v/food-aliment/sodium_eng.pdf)

Health Canada. (2010). *Sodium reduction strategy for Canada*. Retrieved on June 13, 2011, from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/sodium/strateg/index-eng.php>

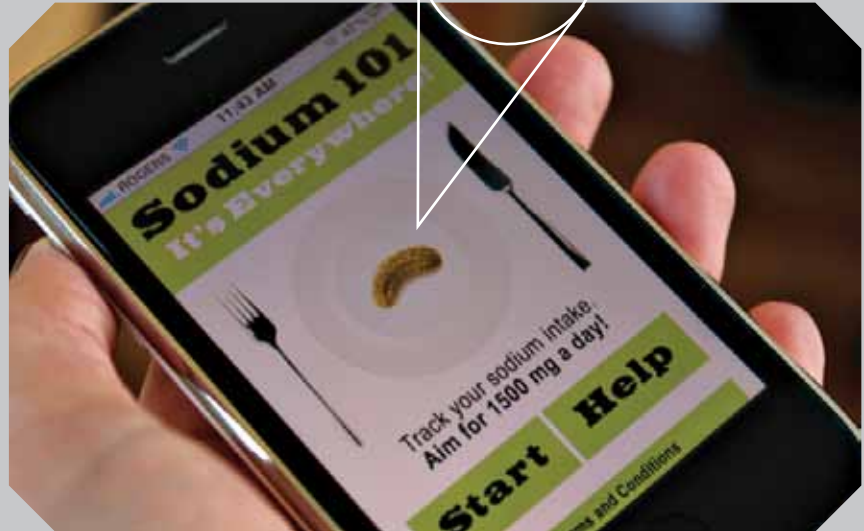
Eat Right Ontario. (2011). *Get the scoop on salt*. Retrieved on July 6, 2011, from <http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/ViewDocument.aspx?id=265>



Get **Sodium101** from the iPhone

# App Store

*Did you know? There's an App for that!*



ANSWERS 1.T, 2.F, 3.T, 4.F, 5.T

The Canadian Stroke Network designed this application to allow you to track your sodium intake. It's a great tool to have on your iPhone— especially when dining out! Visit [www.sodium101.ca/app](http://www.sodium101.ca/app) for more information.

## Resources and WEBSITES

Sodium 101 - [www.sodium101.ca](http://www.sodium101.ca)  
Health Canada - [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)  
Eat Right Ontario - [www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca)  
Heart and Stroke Foundation - [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)



## True and False

T F

- 1. Most Canadians consume more sodium than needed.
- 2. Adding salt during the cooking process is where most Canadians get their sodium intake.
- 3. Sodium is one of the nutrients you will find on the Nutrition Fact Table on a food label.
- 4. It is recommended that you should choose foods with 400 mg or more of sodium per serving.
- 5. One of the main food sources of sodium is baked goods.

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