



June / July 2010

Sodium 101

Sodium is essential in regulating water balance, acid balance, normal pressure in the fluids surrounding cells and in nerve transition. While the body needs some sodium to function, too much may have a negative impact on our health.

According to the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS 2.2) Nutrition, Canadian adults consume an average of 3,092 mg of sodium daily, more than double the level recommended.



What are the sources of sodium?

Sodium is a regular part of our food supply. It is found naturally in meats, nuts, grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy products in low amounts.

Most of the sodium consumed is added to food in the form of sodium chloride, or table salt.

- 1 teaspoonful contains about 6 grams of salt
- 6 grams of salt contains about 2400 mg of sodium



Food manufacturers add sodium to food in the process of preserving and processing, as well as to enhance flavour. Sodium is also hidden in foods as a part of other chemical additives, such as sodium nitrate, sodium benzoate, saccharin, and monosodium glutamate.

CBC News Restaurant Tracker is a tool developed to help consumers make informed restaurant / food choices (August 2009). You can access this tool from the following web-site:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/food/restaurant-tracker.html>

How much sodium do I need to consume?

The amount of sodium intake considered adequate to promote good health in adults is 1,500 mg per day.

According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation, Canadians should not consume more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day. This amount is equivalent to 1 teaspoon of salt.

What are the health risks associated with high sodium intake?

A diet high in sodium is associated with an increased risk of high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke, heart disease and kidney disease.

Some facts from the Heart & Stroke Foundation web-site:

- 3 in 10 Canadians have been diagnosed with high blood pressure caused by eating too much sodium.
- 1/3 of Canadians are particularly sensitive to the blood-pressure-elevating effects of sodium.
- Reducing dietary sodium would prevent 11,500 Canadians from having a stroke or heart attack each year.

How can I reduce my sodium intake?

- Read nutrition labels and check the percentage of the Daily Value (%DV) for sodium. Compare and select foods with a lower %DV. Visit the following web-site to enhance your understanding of food nutrition labels:

http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikiQLcMWJtE/b.4391511/k.5226/Health_Check_Nutrition_Facts_table.htm

- Cut down on prepared and processed foods such as pizza, processed cheese, hot dogs, ham, fries and potato chips.
- Increase your consumption of fresh, unprocessed foods such as fruits and vegetables. Buy fresh and frozen poultry or meat that has not been injected with a sodium-containing solution.
- Reduce the amount of salt you add while cooking, baking or at the table. Try using herbs, spices and other flavouring such as garlic and lemon juice.
- Limit your use of sodium-laden condiments such as salad dressings, sauces, dips, ketchup, mustard and relish.
- Look for foods with claims such as "salt-free" (less than 5 mg of sodium per serving), "low in sodium" (140 mg of sodium or less per serving), or "reduced in sodium" (at least 25 percent less than the regular product).
- When dining out, order dressings and sauces on the side and use sparingly.
- When eating at a fast food restaurant, ask for the nutrition information and select those foods with lower sodium content.

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 bowl (300 g) / Pour 1 bol (300 g)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Teneur	% valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 440	
Fat / Lipides 19 g	29 %
Saturated / Saturés 4 g	21 %
+ Trans / Trans 0.2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 35 mg	
Sodium / Sodium 860 mg	36 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 53 g	18 %
Fibre / Fibres 4 g	16 %
Sugars / Sucres 6 g	
Protein / Protéines 15 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	45 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	4 %
Calcium / Calcium	20 %
Iron / Fer	20 %

Picture source:

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>

For further information, visit the following web-sites:

Health Canada: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/sodium-eng.php>

CBC Canada report: <http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2009/09/23/salt-diet-food-supply.html>

Heart & Stroke Foundation:

http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikiQLcMWJtE/b.4391501/k.83E/Health_Check_nutrient_standards_for_sodium.htm

References

The following web-sites were consulted to write this edition of the Wellness E-digest:

Health Canada - <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/food-aliment/sodium-eng.php>

Heart & Stroke Foundation - <http://www.heartandstroke.com>

CBC News - <http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2009/07/23/f-salt-reducing-health-risks.html>

Center for Science in the Public Interest - <http://www.cspinet.org/salt/>