

New Sodium (Salt) Warning Rule: What Food Service Establishments Need to Know

What is the new rule?

The new rule requires chain food service establishments to

- Show which food items have more than the recommended limit of sodium (salt) per day by placing a **warning icon** next to those items on menus (including print and electronic), menu boards and item tags.
- Post the sodium **warning statement** where customers place their orders. The statement explains that items with the icon have more than the recommended limit of sodium per day and that having too much sodium is a health risk.

What is the recommended limit of sodium per day?

The recommended daily sodium limit is 2,300 mg.

Why do high-sodium food items need to be labeled?

The average American adult consumes almost 50% more sodium than the recommended limit per day. Restaurant food tends to have more sodium than food prepared at home.

Consuming too much sodium is linked to

- Increased blood pressure
- Risk of heart disease
- Risk of stroke

Together, heart disease and stroke kill more Americans each year than *any* other cause.

Does this rule apply to my business?

This rule applies to **all food service establishments** that require a Health Department permit and are part of a **chain**. “Chain” refers to any establishment with 15 or more locations doing business in the U.S. under the same name and offering the same, or almost the same, menu items.

Food service establishments that are part of a chain and must follow the new rule include restaurants, cafeterias, mobile food vendors and temporary food vendors.

Where can I get the sodium warning icon?

This is the icon that must be posted. You can download the image from nyc.gov/health/salt and place it on your menus, menu boards and item tags.



Where must the icon be placed?

The icon must be placed directly on the menu, menu board or item tag next to any food item that has 2,300 mg of sodium or more. This includes printed and electronic menus used to self-order or place an order through an operator.

What size should the icon be?

The icon must always be as wide as it is tall. (Do not stretch or shrink the icon's shape.) The icon must also be equal in height to the largest letter of the food item's name, as displayed on the menu, menu board or item tag.

What about combination meals (meals with multiple food items)?

If the entire combination meal contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you must place the sodium warning icon next to the combination meal on the menu.

Some combination meals allow customers to choose from different options for part of the meal. If any option results in a combination meal with 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you must place the sodium warning icon next to the combination meal on the menu.

What about menu items that can be customized or have different toppings?

If any possible version of the item contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you must place the sodium warning icon next to the item on the menu.

What about menu items with multiple servings?

Some menu items contain more than one serving and are intended to be shared by more than one person – for example, a “family-size” bucket of chicken or a large pizza pie divided into eight slices.

For these items, if the serving unit has less than 2,300 mg of sodium, you do not have to label the item with the warning icon – even if all servings added together would total more than 2,300 mg of sodium.

However, if each serving unit has 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you do have to place the sodium warning icon next to the item on the menu. The icon may be posted next to the listing for the entire item (for example, pizza pie) or next to the serving (for example, a slice), depending on how the item is listed on the menu.

Food items served on one person's plate are not multiple servings.

What is the warning statement?

The warning statement is another part of the new rule. This is the statement:

Warning:  indicates that the sodium (salt) content of this item is higher than the total daily recommended limit (2,300 mg). High sodium intake can increase blood pressure and risk of heart disease and stroke.

Where must the warning statement be posted?

It must be posted in a clearly visible place at the point where customers place their order at a chain food service establishment.

When does the new rule go into effect?

This rule went into effect December 1, 2015. The Health Department started issuing violations June 6, 2016.

How does the Health Department enforce this rule?

Health Department inspectors educate food service establishments about the rule. A restaurant that is not following the rule may get a violation that could lead to a \$200 fine. Getting a violation will not affect a restaurant's letter grade.

To read this fact sheet in other languages or to read the new sodium warning Health Code regulation, visit: nyc.gov/health/salt. You can also call 311 and ask about the **sodium warning rule**. Health inspectors are also available to answer questions.

Note: The following information was added to this guide on August 2016, and provides answers to new, follow-up questions from food service establishments.

Does the sodium warning statement need to be placed on every page of a menu?

No. However, the warning statement must be posted in a *clearly visible* part of the menu. Posting the warning statement on the same menu pages where the sodium warning icon appears is one way to meet this requirement.

Does the icon need to appear on my website or mobile application?

It depends. The icon must be posted on your website or mobile application (app) if customers can place an order through your website or application.

If your website or application does not allow consumers to place food orders, you do not need to post the warning icons or statement. (The sodium warning icon is not required on third party online ordering sites, such as Seamless or Grub Hub, because the companies operating these websites are not food service establishments with a Health Department permit.)

If you're having trouble meeting this requirement, the Department *may* consider individual requests for modifications. Please email salt@health.nyc.gov.

Can I design my own sodium warning icon?

No. Please see page 1 of this guide for details about the sodium warning icon that must be used, including where to obtain it.

Would the Health Department review my menu mock-up?

Yes. We invite you to send a review request along with your menu/menu board mock-ups or other images to salt@health.nyc.gov. The Health Department will provide feedback on your proposed menus as quickly as it can.

Do I need to post on my menu how many milligrams (mg) of sodium each menu item contains?

No. However, beginning in May 2017, City and federal laws will require that you keep this information—and other nutrition information—on site for customers who request it.

My establishment does not offer any menu items or combination meals with 2,300 mg of sodium or more. Do I still need to post the warning statement?

No. If you do not offer any items that contain 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you do not need to post the warning statement.

If I add or change a menu item, and the new or updated item needs a warning, how soon do I need to add the warning?

If the ingredients or portion size of a menu item change, and as a result the item now contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more, the icon must be added to the menu or menu board **as soon as that item is offered to customers.**

The same is true for new menu items.

If the ingredients or portion size of a menu item change, and that item **no longer contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more**, you do not need to place the sodium warning icon. You are welcome to tell the Health Department about such changes, so we can update our enforcement database as quickly as possible. To tell us, send the updated sodium information to salt@health.nyc.gov.

Does the rule also apply to menu items that are promotional or only temporarily available?

Yes. The sodium warning rule applies to all menu items that have 2,300 mg of sodium or more, even if they're only offered for a short time.

Where does the warning icon need to be posted for combination meals that contain 2,300 mg of sodium or more?

There are many options you may choose from. Here are a few:

- You may place an icon next to the heading of a menu section, if the items in that section meet or exceed the 2,300 mg limit.
- You may place icons next to the combination meal item names, or numbers, to indicate that they contain 2,300 mg or sodium or more.
- If a particular variation of a combination meal contains 2,300 mg of sodium or more, you may place the icon next to that particular variation of the combination meal.

Does the sodium in beverages count towards a combination meal's total sodium?

Yes.

Do I need an icon for menu items or meals that come in different sizes (i.e. medium size meal combination)?

Yes. Any variation with 2,300 mg of sodium or more *must* be identified with an icon.