

# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#95 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers

## Choose Less Sodium



Too much salt can lead to heart attack and stroke.

# Most people eat more salt than they should.

- It's the sodium in salt that makes your blood pressure go up.
- Cutting down on salt helps prevent and control high blood pressure.
- Most people should eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day. This is most important for those who are black, over 50, or have high blood pressure, diabetes or kidney disease.
- Even people with normal blood pressure benefit from lower blood pressure. Lower blood pressure decreases the risk of heart attack and stroke.



## Your salt shaker is not the main problem.

- Most salt we eat – almost 80% – comes from packaged and restaurant food (including fast food).
- Only about 10% of the sodium in our diet comes from salt we add during cooking or at the table.



## Many foods pack a lot more salt than you think.

### Read the Nutrition Facts label to choose products with less sodium.



- The can of soup on the right has a lot of sodium – 840 mg per serving. Most people should eat no more than 1,500 mg of sodium per day.
- Check the number of servings per container. The can on the right contains two servings, so if you eat the whole can, you'll get *twice* as much sodium (1680 mg) – more than you should eat in a day.
- Foods high in salt don't always taste salty. Always check the label.

# Cut the salt when...

## Shopping for food

- Fresh foods usually have less salt than canned or processed foods.
- Canned items such as beans and soup broth can be high in salt. Compare labels and look for 'low-sodium' or 'no salt added' versions.
- Check the label when you buy raw meat; it often has added salt.
- Packaged foods marketed as 'healthy' or 'low-fat' may not be low in sodium. Always check the label.
- Salad dressings and condiments, such as ketchup and soy sauce, can have more sodium than you think.

## At home

- Cut down on salt gradually, over a few weeks or even months. You'll be less likely to notice a difference.
- Snack on fresh fruits and vegetables instead of salty chips and popcorn.
- Try 1/2 teaspoon of salt when recipes call for 1 teaspoon.
- Be aware that some seasonings like adobo, garlic salt and lemon pepper contain salt.
- Make your own seasonings without salt. Use oregano, basil, celery seed, curry powder, cayenne pepper or other herbs and spices to add flavor.
- Many salt substitutes contain potassium. If you're taking medications regularly or have kidney disease, talk to your doctor before using a salt substitute.

## Eating out

- Ask for your meal without added salt. You can always salt to taste.
- Some restaurants – especially chain restaurants – provide nutritional information. Ask for a copy.

# Same Foods – BIG Difference in Sodium

The amount of sodium in packaged foods varies a *lot* by brand.

	Serving Size	Range of Sodium (mg) per Serving*
<b>Canned soup</b> 	1 cup	30-950
<b>Canned vegetables</b> 	½ cup	10-550
<b>Sliced bread</b> 	1 slice	75-310
<b>Frozen cheese pizza</b> 	1 slice	460-1190
<b>Frozen meals</b> 	6-10 ounces	260-1300
<b>Tomato juice</b> 	8 ounces	140-680
<b>Salad dressing</b> 	2 tablespoons	20-620
<b>Salsa</b> 	2 tablespoons	90-250
<b>Potato chips</b> 	1 ounce	5-250
<b>Pretzels</b> 	1 ounce	75-580

\*Based on a convenience sample

**Always read labels. For example, by choosing your pizza wisely, you can avoid 730 mg of sodium.**

## More Information

- **New York City Health Department:** [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) or call 311
- **U.S. Food and Drug Administration:** [fda.gov](http://fda.gov)
- **National Institutes of Health:** [nlm.nih.gov](http://nlm.nih.gov)
- **American Heart Association:** [heart.org](http://heart.org)
- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:** [eatright.org](http://eatright.org)

**DIAL  
311**

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**DIAL 311** For Non-Emergency NYC Services  
Telephone Interpretation in More Than 170 Languages

