

SODIUM: THE FACTS



Sodium is Essential

Sodium is an essential mineral required to maintain health. Working in combination with other elements such as potassium and chloride, sodium is primarily responsible for regulating water content and electrolyte balance in body fluids.



The minimum physiological sodium requirement is estimated at about 200-500 mg daily.

Sodium is found naturally in foods such as milk, meat and fish.

Salt or Sodium

About 90% of the sodium that we consume is in the form of salt. The words salt and sodium are often used interchangeably, yet are not the same.

1 g SALT = 400 mg SODIUM

1 g SODIUM = 2.5 g SALT

Health Impact of Excess Sodium



Scientific data indicate a strong causal and dose-dependent relationship between high sodium consumption and elevated blood pressure.



There is only modest direct evidence suggesting that reducing sodium intake reduces CVD risk. Nevertheless, blood pressure is a well-established surrogate marker of CVD risk.



Excess sodium intake promotes structural and functional impairment of the heart, vessels, and kidneys, which can evolve over time toward cardiovascular and renal complications of all kinds.



Excess sodium intake has also been linked to osteoporosis and gastric cancer.

Roles of Salt in Food



Taste



Preservation



Texture

Sodium Recommendation

World Health Organization recommends limiting free sodium to:



2000 mg per day

Adult
2000 kcal



1600 mg per day

Child
1600 kcal

(adjusted to energy requirements)

Sodium and Other Minerals



Other minerals, especially potassium and possibly magnesium or calcium, appear to be at least as important as sodium in regulation of body fluids.

A combination of these nutrients in the diet seems to be more effective in promoting healthy blood pressure than any one nutrient alone.

In fact, public health interventions should aim to reduce sodium intake and simultaneously increase potassium intake from foods (e.g. fruit, vegetables and nuts), as recommended by WHO.

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