

Sodium – How Too Little Or Too Much Can Ruin Your Diet & Prevent Weight Loss?

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I finally drew the conclusion that most Americans have no clue how much sodium they consume on a daily basis. The data on sodium presented here is based on scientific research, but realize that every individual has different sodium needs based on their health and daily activity. Always contact your physician before using any of this data provided here.

The below is the minimum, yet not exactly proven, U.S. Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA) and please pay attention that the word minimum is used here:

- Adults 500 mg
- Children 400 mg
- Infants 120-200 mg

Do not use less than the above amounts and higher dosages are needed if you are an athlete, outside worker or a soldier. The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute has found that adults average 4-5 grams (4,000-5,000 mg) of sodium per day far exceeding what the body needs of 500 mg.

Many health organizations recommend that if you do not need to lose weight and do not have health problems (high blood pressure) to stay under 2,400 mg of sodium per day, which is half of what the average American consumes. There has been no upper level safety limit of sodium since the body does get rid of the excess sodium through the kidneys. But, trying to lose weight requires one to stay

closer to the minimum levels listed above (RDA) as long as one is under the care of their physician.

Table salt contains 40% sodium and 60% chloride. One teaspoon of salt contains approximately 2,000 mg of sodium or 4 times the daily amount needed. Estimates observed in adults have seen anywhere from 2,300 to 7,000 mg of sodium consumed per day, which is equivalent to 1-3 teaspoons of table salt. There are other studies that show some Americans consume 8-12,000 mg of salt per day, which is about 20-30 times the amount needed daily.

Sodium is needed to maintain blood volume and the pressure inside cells. It's the main electrolyte that helps water to be pumped into a cell. Potassium, another essential electrolyte, does the opposite and helps the cell pump to the outside of the cell wastes and other by-products from cellular chemical processes that occur inside the cell.

However, some people do not get rid of enough sodium thru their urine and in turn this causes the body to retain water. This results in swelling of the body and with the increased blood and fluid volume in turn causes high blood pressure. The high blood pressure then puts a strain on the heart since it has to work harder to pump this extra volume of blood.

Sodium is hiding in most foods and is not limited to the salt shaker on the table. It's found in pickles, olives, deli meats, and used to process canned goods and frozen foods. It is also disguised as different names on food packages:

- Sodium nitrate and sodium benzoate (preservatives).
- Sodium phosphate and sodium caseinate (increases texture to foods).
- Monosodium glutamate and sodium saccharin (alters flavors).

Labeling can be confusing causing too much sodium to be consumed:

- **Low sodium:** means a product contains less than 140 mg of sodium per serving.

- **Reduced sodium:** means a product that has been reduced by 75% compared to a non-reduced product.

The confusion starts with not paying attention to the exact wording of the above definitions particularly the words “per serving.” A person could think they are eating an entire container of food that is low in sodium yet the container holds 4 servings that are extremely high in sodium.

The surprising sodium (mg) content of a few foods:

• Table salt	1tsp	2358
• Potato chips	1 ounce	183
• Deli ham	1 ounce	341
• Deli turkey breast	1 ounce	335
• Deli bologna	1 ounce	295
• Pretzels	1 ounce	486
• Orange juice	8 ounces	473
• Soft drink	8 ounces	16-52
• Cottage cheese	1 cup	850
• Tuna	3 ounces	468
• Canned shrimp	3 ounces	1,955
• Frankfurter (beef)	1 frank	504
• Sauerkraut	1 cup	1460
• Chicken soup canned	1 cup	850
• Pickle, dill	1 large	1731
• Sardines	3 ounces	429
• Cheese, American	1 ounce	304
• Catsup	1 tablespoon	210
• Pizza, 1 slice	1/8 of 8” pie	817
• Green beans (canned)	1 cup	339
• Green beans (fresh)	1 cup	4
• Margarine (soft spread)	1 tablespoon	460

It’s extremely important to read the ingredient labels of all foods and know what you are eating. This is not only true for trying to lose

weight, but for sodium-restricted diets used by persons with health related problems.

I recommend consumption of sodium using tablet form discussed in the diet book I recently wrote, *Diet of the Future*. This way, you'll have more control of the amounts of sodium you consume.

-Dr. Donald Fox