

Salt and blood pressure

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Eat low salt foods

Eating foods low in salt reduces the risk of high blood pressure and stroke. It also lowers the risk of heart disease and other health problems.

Salt is sodium chloride. It's the sodium in salt that can be bad for your health.

What to look for...

Around 75% of the salt we eat comes from processed and takeaway foods. So, while it's good to reduce salt at the table and in cooking, we also need to look out for the salt in foods we buy.

Fresh foods are generally lower in salt than processed foods.

Fresh foods include:



fruit



vegetables



eggs



fish



unsalted
nuts



unprocessed
meat



milk

Buying packaged foods? Most of these have a Nutrition Information Panel that allows you to check the sodium levels.

Food is low in salt if it has **less than 120mg of sodium per 100g of food.**

You can also compare the Health Star Rating on similar foods, and choose the option with the highest rating.

How to check for sodium levels in packaged foods

Below is a Nutrition Information Panel from a can of whole-kernel corn.

Servings per package: 3 Serving size: 80g

	Quantity per serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	290kJ	60kJ
Protein	3.0g	3.7g
Fat, total	1.0g	1.2g
- saturated	0.1g	0.1g
Carbohydrate	10.5g	13.1g
- sugars	2.7g	3.4g
Dietary fibre	2.9g	3.6g
Sodium	95mg	115mg
Potassium	270mg	335mg

To check the amount of sodium, check the figure in the "Quantity per 100g" column. For this can of whole-kernel corn, it's 115mg per 100g, which is considered low-salt.

Use guidelines to choose lower-salt foods:

LOW-SALT FOODS	MEDIUM-SALT FOODS	HIGH-SALT FOODS
Less than 120mg sodium per 100g.	120 to 600mg sodium per 100g.	More than 600mg sodium per 100g.
These are good choices.	These foods are okay most of the time, but try to choose foods from the lower end of this range.	Limit these foods.

Recommended daily intake

The World Health Organisation recommends adults eat less than 5g of salt (2,000mg of sodium) a day to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and the risk of stroke. That equals about one teaspoon a day.

Health Star Ratings

Health Star Ratings show the overall nutrition content of packaged foods. It uses a rating scale of 0.5 to 5 stars. When comparing similar products, a higher Health Star Rating means a healthier option.



If you can't find food that contains less than 120mg of sodium per 100g, compare the Nutrition Information Panels on different brands and choose the one with the lowest sodium.

Even a small difference helps you cut down on salt, especially if it's something you eat a lot.

Salt in everyday food

Salt (sodium) is found in some of our favourite foods – so it's easy to eat more than 5g (2,000mg sodium) a day.

Because we eat large quantities of **bread**, it's a major source of salt in our diets. Choose wholemeal or wholegrain breads – they're generally lower in salt. Use the Nutrition Information Panel on the packaging to find the bread with the lowest sodium content per 100g.

Limit **processed meats** (ham, bacon, sausages, salami, luncheon), **smoked foods**, and foods in **brine** (salty water). They're generally very high in salt.

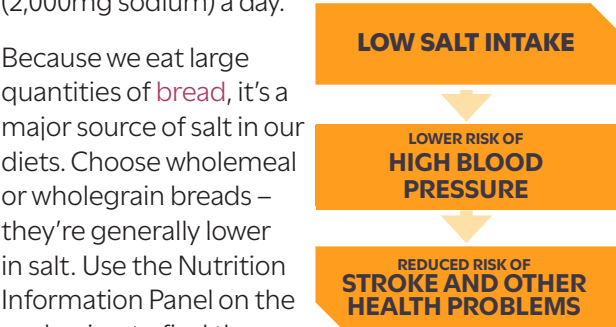


Tomato sauces, chutneys, marinades, instant noodles and soy sauces can also be high in salt. Products vary a lot from brand to brand, so check the Nutrition Information Panel.

Fast food and **takeaways** are often full of salt. If you eat them just one day in the week, watch your salt intake for the rest of that week.

Use this checklist to help you pick lower-salt (sodium) options:

Bread	Less than 450mg sodium per 100g
Breakfast cereals	Less than 400mg sodium per 100g
Table spreads	Less than 400mg sodium per 100g
Crackers	Less than 350mg sodium per 100g



TIPS FOR REDUCING YOUR SALT INTAKE



Eat more vegetables and fruit.



Check the label before you buy.



Compare the Nutrition Information Panel or Health Star Rating on products.



Cut back on fast food and other takeaways and avoid adding salt to chips.



Flavour your food using herbs, garlic, spices or pepper, instead of using salt.

About Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand

Stroke Aotearoa New Zealand is the national charity dedicated to stroke prevention and improving outcomes for stroke survivors and their whānau. The generosity of individuals allows us to provide every aspect of our life-changing services.

If you want to find out more about donating or fundraising to help protect the lives of people living in your community, please call **0800 45 99 54** or email **fundraising@stroke.org.nz**.

