



Salt

finding the balance

*Let your speech always be with grace,
seasoned with salt . . . Colossians 4:6*

Where sodium in our diet actually comes from

- Roughly 70% is already in the food
- Breads and rolls
- Deli meats and cured proteins
- Soups, sauces, and dressings
- Pizza, sandwiches, and restaurant entrées
- Salt added while cooking
- Salt added at the table

Only a small share comes from the shaker, which is why label reading beats shaker discipline.

The concern: sodium and blood pressure

- Excess sodium pulls water into the bloodstream, raising blood volume and pressure
- Sustained high blood pressure strains the heart, arteries, and kidneys
- It is a leading contributor to heart disease and stroke worldwide
- Reducing intake lowers blood pressure within weeks – and the effect is largest for those already elevated
- Salt sensitivity varies: age, genetics, and kidney function all shift the response

Why salt is good for us

Maintains Fluid Balance

Sodium helps regulate the movement of water in and out of cells, keeping tissues properly hydrated. [\[scienceinsights.org\]](https://scienceinsights.org), [\[health.com\]](https://health.com)

Supports Nerve Function

Nerve cells rely on sodium to transmit electrical signals throughout the body, including communication between the brain and muscles. [\[scienceinsights.org\]](https://scienceinsights.org), [\[doctopathy.com\]](https://doctopathy.com)

Enables Muscle Contraction

Sodium works with potassium to allow muscles, including the heart muscle, to contract and relax properly. [\[scienceinsights.org\]](https://scienceinsights.org), [\[doctopathy.com\]](https://doctopathy.com)

Helps Regulate Blood Pressure

Appropriate sodium levels help maintain blood volume and circulation. Both too little and too much can be problematic. [\[health.com\]](https://health.com), [\[mayowellness.com\]](https://mayowellness.com)

Supports Normal Heart Rhythm

As an electrolyte, sodium contributes to proper electrical signaling in the heart. [\[health.com\]](https://health.com), [\[mayowellness.com\]](https://mayowellness.com)

Assists Nutrient Absorption

Sodium helps the intestines absorb certain nutrients, including glucose and amino acids. [\[scienceinsights.org\]](https://scienceinsights.org)

Prevents Hyponatremia

Adequate sodium intake helps prevent dangerously low blood sodium levels, which can cause confusion, fatigue, headaches, nausea, and muscle weakness. [\[health.com\]](https://health.com), [\[doctopathy.com\]](https://doctopathy.com)

Supports Exercise and Heat Tolerance

Athletes and people who sweat heavily lose sodium through perspiration and may need additional replenishment.

Balance, not elimination

BENEFITS OF ADEQUATE SODIUM

- Steady hydration and blood volume
- Normal nerve and muscle function
- Iodine supply from iodized salt
- Replacement after heavy sweating or illness

CONCERNS WITH EXCESS

- Higher blood pressure over time
- Added cardiovascular and stroke risk
- Strain on kidney function
- Fluid retention and bloating

How much is right?

- WHO guidance: under 2,000 mg of sodium a day – about one teaspoon of salt
- American Heart Association ideal target: 1,500 mg for most adults (2,300 mg max)
- Typical US intake: roughly 3,400 mg a day
- Athletes, heavy sweaters, and some medical conditions need more
- Aim for a direction of travel, not a perfect number

Five swaps to try this week

Small, repeatable changes beat a strict low-salt stretch you abandon in a month.

- Compare sodium per serving on the label
- Cook one more meal at home each week
- Season with acid, herbs, and spice first
- Rinse canned beans and vegetables
- Build meals around potassium-rich produce

THE TAKEAWAY

Salt is not the enemy – excess is.
Aim for balance, cook more than
you unwrap, and let the label guide
the shaker.

