

Kellogg's[®] Sheet Facts

Salt

Salt is one of the oldest food ingredients used by people, and it is used because of its taste, preservative effects and role in bread making and fermentation.

How much salt should we eat?

Scientists prefer to talk in terms of sodium, one of two components of common salt. The upper level of intake of sodium is 2300mg¹. This represents the amount found in about 6g, or one rounded teaspoon of salt. Sodium is naturally found in foods and is also added to foods during manufacture or during cooking or baking.

Salt preferences vary widely. Many people are now consuming less salt, while there are also people who prefer moderate amounts of salt in their diets.

Salt in foods

- Sodium is naturally present in fresh foods such as meat, fish and milk, however fruit, vegetables and grains generally have low sodium content.
- Sodium is also added in food processing. If you wish to limit salt intake, it helps to read food labels, as listing the sodium content on the nutrition information panel is compulsory.
- Breakfast cereals with a 'low salt' content are those with a sodium level listed in the nutrition information panel of less than 120mg per 100g. 'Moderate' sodium levels are 400mg per 100g.

Salt (sodium) and health

There has been some concern over the years about the link between salt and blood pressure. Scientific evidence shows that:

- Sodium intake can influence blood pressure in some people, but genetic and lifestyle factors (including age, physical activity, body weight, alcohol intake and other dietary factors) can be more important.
- About one in five people are 'salt sensitive' (blood pressure rises with a high sodium intake) and for these people, it is important to limit their sodium intake.
- If a person is overweight, reducing weight can have the greatest effect of all lifestyle changes on lowering blood pressure.
- Getting enough of several other minerals – including calcium, potassium and magnesium – is important for normalising blood pressure. For example, diets with the same sodium content but containing more fruit and vegetables, which are high in potassium and magnesium and low fat, dairy products which contain calcium were found to have three times the blood pressure lowering effect of salt (or sodium) restriction alone².
- For most people there is usually no harm in having a low or moderate salt intake.

How to best guard against high blood pressure:

- If overweight, reduce weight and maintain a healthy weight.
- Be physically active.
- Eat more fruit, vegetables and low fat dairy products.
- Limit alcohol intake.
- Moderate salt intake by using less in prepared foods and reading nutrition labels.

References:

¹ NH&NRC (2006) Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand, Commonwealth of Australia.

² Appel LJ et.al. "A clinical trial of the effects of dietary patterns on blood pressure", New England Journal of Medicine 1997; 336:1117-24.

For further information, please contact Kellogg's Nutrition Advisory Service.

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