

# Test Your Salt Savvy

Alice Henneman, MS, RD  
Extension Educator

Salt is in the news a lot lately. Most reports say Americans are consuming too much of it. How much do you REALLY know about salt? Test your “salt savvy” with the following quiz!

Before you read further, you may wonder, “What’s the difference between ‘salt’ and ‘sodium?’” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention<sup>(1)</sup>:

- Sodium chloride is the chemical name for salt.
- The words salt and sodium are not exactly the same, yet these words are often used in place of each other. For example, the Nutrition Facts Panel uses “sodium,” whereas the front of the package may say “low salt.”
- Ninety percent of the sodium we consume is in the form of salt.



In the following questions and answers, the terms “salt” and “sodium” will be used interchangeably.

## Questions:

1) Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 recommend people ages 2 and older reduce daily sodium intake to less than:

- 2,300 mg or 1,500 mg, depending on age / other individual characteristics
- 2,300 mg or 3,000 mg, depending on age / other individual characteristics
- 3,000 mg or 3,400 mg, depending on age / other individual characteristics

2) What is the approximate average daily sodium intake for persons age 2 and up in the United States?

- 800 mg
- 1,500 mg
- 2,300 mg
- 3,400 mg

3) Which of the following are benefits from reducing the amount of sodium in our diets?

- Lowered blood pressure
- Reduced risk of heart disease
- Reduced risk of stroke
- Reduced risk of gastric cancer
- All of the above

4) Approximately how much of our sodium comes from processed foods?

- 45%
- 55%
- 65%
- 75%

5) How much sodium is in a teaspoon of salt?

- 1,300 mg
- 2,300 mg
- 3,300 mg

6) Can foods can be high in salt without tasting salty?

- Yes
- No

7.) Based on the Nutrition Facts label at right, how much sodium is in 1 cup of the food?

- 30 mg
- 250 mg
- 470 mg

## Answers:

1) **2,300 mg or 1,500 mg, depending on age / other individual characteristics.** The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 recommend consuming less than 2,300 mg of sodium

for the general population 2 through 50 years of age. They recommend a further reduction in intake to 1,500 mg among persons who are 51 and older and those of any age who are African American or have hypertension, diabetes, or chronic kidney disease. This 1,500 mg recommendation applies to about half of the U.S. population, including children, and the majority of adults.<sup>(2)</sup>

2) **d. 3,400 mg.** The average daily sodium intake for age 2 and up is 3,436 mg. This amount equals about 1.5 teaspoons of salt per day.<sup>(3)</sup>

*continued on next page*

## Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup (228g)  
Servings Per Container 2

Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	<b>18%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g	<b>15%</b>
Trans Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	<b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 0g	<b>0%</b>
Sugars 5g	

Protein 5g	
Vitamin A	<b>4%</b>
Vitamin C	<b>2%</b>
Calcium	<b>20%</b>
Iron	<b>4%</b>

\* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your Daily Values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

	Calories: 2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than 65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than 20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than 300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than 2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate	300g	375g
Dietary Fiber	25g	30g

3) e. All of the above.<sup>(4)</sup>

4) d. 75 percent. The natural sodium content of food, on average, accounts for only 10 percent of total intake. Discretionary salt use (i.e., table and cooking salt) provides another 5 to 10 percent of the total. About 75 percent is derived from salt added during processing by manufacturers. The most effective strategies for reducing sodium, therefore, are reducing sodium during food processing, and for individuals to choose more fresh, less processed items and to use less salt during food preparation.<sup>(4)</sup>

5) b. 2,300 mg.<sup>(4)</sup>

6) a. Yes. For example, a food can taste sweet and still contain a significant amount of salt. The best way to determine the amount of salt in a food is to check the Nutrition Facts Label.<sup>(5)</sup>

7) c. 470 mg. When reading nutrition labels, it is important to check the amount of sodium in the serving size you are consuming. For example, if you ate 1.5 cups of this food, you would consume 705 mg of sodium.

## To Reduce the Salt in Your Diet, Try These Tips

- Check food labels for salt and compare brands and varieties for those lower in salt. Many manufacturers are in the process of producing lower salt foods — continue to check labels periodically for lowered amounts of sodium in foods.
- Eat more fresh foods (fruits, vegetables, lean meats, seafood, and poultry). Frozen vegetables are typically lower in sodium than canned vegetables.
- Look for low-sodium products or foods without added salt to replace regular higher-sodium foods. For example, check for no-added-salt or low-sodium versions of broth, vegetables, etc.
- Avoid salting food during cooking or reduce the amount of salt you add in cooking. An exception might be yeast breads where the salt works together with the yeast in the rising process.
- Request salt not be added to your food when eating out.
- Use flavorings other than salt, such as spices and herbs, citrus juices and zest, and flavored vinegars.

<sup>(1)</sup> Source: Sodium: the facts at [http://www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/Sodium\\_Fact\\_Sheet.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/salt/pdfs/Sodium_Fact_Sheet.pdf) and accessed Dec. 1, 2010.

<sup>(2)</sup> Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 Executive Summary at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/PolicyDoc/Exec-Summ.pdf> and retrieved Jan. 31, 2011.

<sup>(3)</sup> Source: Americans Consume Too Much So Sodium [Salt], Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/ds-Sodium/> and retrieved Dec. 1, 2010.

<sup>(4)</sup> Source: Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 at <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/DietaryGuidelines/2010/DGAC/Report/D-6-SodiumPotassiumWater.pdf> and retrieved Dec. 1, 2010.

<sup>(5)</sup> Source: Consensus Action on Salt & Health at <http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/index.html> and accessed Dec. 1, 2010.