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## G89-916 How Much Sodium Are You Eating?

Harriet Kohn

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln*

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## How Much Sodium Are You Eating?

This NebGuide contains information to help you estimate the sodium level of one day's food intake or menu. The content relates to people of all ages.

*Harriet Kohn, Extension Specialist, Food and Nutrition*

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### Sodium:

- Helps maintain water balance
- Is in fluid around body cells
- Too much sodium eaten over a long period of time may lead to high blood pressure in perhaps 20 percent of Americans
- Limiting sodium intake to the lower part of the range (below) may help prevent high blood pressure in those prone to it



### *Estimated safe ranges of sodium for healthy people\*:*



Age	Sodium	Age	Sodium
0 - 6 months	115 - 350 mg	7 - 10 years	600- 1800 mg
6 - 1 year	250 - 750 mg	11 - 18 years	900 - 2700 mg
1 - 3 years	325 - 975 mg	19 - and over	1100- 3300 mg
4-6 years	450-1350 mg		



Note: The sodium ranges were reproduced from: *Recommended Dietary Allowances*, Ninth Edition, 1980, The National Academy of Sciences, Washington, D.C.

\*People on a special low sodium diet may need lower levels of sodium than mentioned above and should follow their doctor's directions.

### To check up on the sodium you are eating, follow these steps:

1. Write down what and how much you had to eat and drink so far today. (If you prefer, write what you had to eat and drink in the last 24 hours.)
2. Find the foods you ate or a reasonable substitute on the following charts. Write down the milligrams (mg) of sodium present in the food you ate. Add the milligrams. Compare with the range of sodium in the chart above for your age.
3. Plan which foods you need to eat for the rest of the day to stay within your sodium range, or plan for tomorrow if you prefer.

 <b>Sodium content of food with added salt or sodium</b> 		
<b>1100 mg-----957-1243 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salt 1/2 tsp</li> <li>• Baking powder 3 tsp</li> <li>• Baking soda 1 tsp</li> <li>• Bouillon 1 cube</li> <li>• Chili con carne 3/4 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dried beef 1 oz</li> <li>• Macaroni &amp; cheese 1 c</li> <li>• Monosodium glutamate 1 1/2 tsp</li> <li>• Pickle, dill 1/2 lg</li> <li>• Pork &amp; beans 1 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pretzel thin 11</li> <li>• Sauerkraut 2/3 c</li> <li>• Soups, can (avg) 1 c</li> <li>• Soy sauce 2 1/2 tsp</li> <li>• Spaghetti, meatballs &amp; sauce 1 c</li> </ul>
<b>800 mg-----696-904 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bologna 2 oz</li> <li>• Chicken-a-la-king 1 c</li> <li>• Chicken chow mein, can 1 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corned beef 3 oz</li> <li>• Ham, cured 3 oz</li> <li>• Luncheon meat 2 1/2 oz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potato salad 2/3 c</li> <li>• Taco or enchilada 1</li> <li>• Tuna, can 3 1/2 oz</li> </ul>
<b>500mg-----435-565mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barbecue sauce 1/4 c</li> <li>• Beef or chicken pot pie 1/3 9" diam</li> <li>• Bread stuffing 1/2 c</li> <li>• Catsup 3 Tbsp</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cornbread 2" sq</li> <li>• Frankfurter 1</li> <li>• Pizza with sausage 1 wedge</li> <li>• Pork sausage 4 links</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pork sausage 2 patties</li> <li>• Salad dressing (avg) 2 Tbsp</li> <li>• Salt 1/4 scant tsp</li> <li>• White sauce 1/2 c</li> </ul>
<b>300 mg-----261-339 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Buttermilk 1 c</li> <li>• Cheeses               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cheddar 1 1/2 oz</li> <li>○ Cottage 1/2 c</li> <li>○ Parmesan 1/3 c</li> <li>○ Process 1 oz</li> <li>○ Swiss 1 1/2 oz</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Coleslaw 1 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frosted layer cake 2 1/2" wedge</li> <li>• Malted milk 1 1/2 c</li> <li>• Olives, green 3</li> <li>• Pancakes 2, 4" diam</li> <li>• Peanut butter 3 Tbsp</li> <li>• Peanuts, salted 1/2 c</li> <li>• Pie, fruit or cream (avg)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ready-to-eat cereal, added salt 1 oz or 1 c</li> <li>• Rice, cooked 1/2 c</li> <li>• Tomato juice or cocktail, can 2/3 c</li> <li>• Vegetables, can (avg) such as asparagus, beets, corn, green beans, peas,</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooked cereals (avg) 2/3 c</li> <li>• French fried potatoes 20 med</li> </ul>	3" wedge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Popcorn 1 1/2 c</li> <li>• Potato chips 15</li> <li>• Potatoes, mashed 1/2 c</li> </ul>	tomatoes, etc. 3/4 c <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Waffle 2, 4" diam</li> </ul>
<b>150 mg-----130-170 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bacon 2 sl</li> <li>• Bread, any kind (avg) 1 sl</li> <li>• Butter 1 Tbsp</li> <li>• Cake, plain 3" sq</li> <li>• Cookies, sandwich 3</li> <li>• Choc. chip cookies 4</li> <li>• Doughnut 1 1/2</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Egg, scrambled 1</li> <li>• Graham crackers 3 sq</li> <li>• Ice milk 1 1/2 c</li> <li>• Margarine 1 Tbsp</li> <li>• Mayonnaise 2 Tbsp</li> <li>• Milk, condensed (sw) 1/2 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muffin or roll 1 sm</li> <li>• Mustard, prepared 2 1/2 tsp</li> <li>• Olives, ripe 5</li> <li>• Pudding, made with milk 1/2 c</li> <li>• Saltine crackers 5</li> <li>• Sardines 1 lg</li> </ul>
	<b>Sodium content of ready-to-eat foods</b> <b>*Unsalted</b>	
<b>120 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaporated milk 1/2 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milk, whole or skim 1 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yogurt 1 c</li> </ul>
<b>60 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brains, heart and liver 2 oz</li> <li>• Cheese, low sodium dietetic 3 oz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• egg 1</li> <li>• Fish, fresh or canned without salt 3 oz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meat or poultry 3 oz</li> <li>• Shrimp 2 oz</li> </ul>
<b>40 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beets 1/2 c</li> <li>• Beet greens 1/3 c</li> <li>• Carrots 1 c</li> <li>• Celery 2 stalks</li> <li>• Dandelion greens 1 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ice cream 1/2 c</li> <li>• Kale 3/4 c</li> <li>• Milk for babies               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Human 1 c</li> <li>○ Enfamil 2/3 c</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mustard greens 1 1/2 c</li> <li>• Spinach, cooked 1/2 c</li> </ul>
<b>9 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry curd cottage cheese unsalted 1/2 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most vegetables, fresh, frozen or canned without salt (except for those in 40 mg section above) 1/2 c</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lincoln, NE 1 c</li> <li>○ Omaha, NE 3/4 c</li> <li>○ (Check with local water co. for sodium content)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>5 mg</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breads, rolls and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dried beans and peas,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macaroni, noodles,</li> </ul>

crackers low sodium 1 sl or 1 ea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooked cereals, unsalted 1/2 c</li> <li>• Corn 1/2 ear</li> <li>• Cream, heavy 1 Tbsp</li> </ul>	cooked 1/2 c <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dry cereals made without salt: puffed rice, puffed wheat; shredded wheat 3/4 c</li> <li>• Flour, plain 2 1/2 Tbsp</li> </ul>	spaghetti, rice, barley, cooked, unsalted 1/2 c <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mashed potatoes, unsalted 1/2 c</li> <li>• Potato, white 1</li> <li>• Sweet Potato 1/2 small</li> </ul>
<b>3 mg or less</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Butter, margarine or oils, unsalted</li> <li>• Cocoa powder</li> <li>• Coffee and tea (dry form)</li> <li>• Cream of tartar</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruit</li> <li>• Fruit juices</li> <li>• Gelatin, unflavored</li> <li>• Nuts, unsalted</li> <li>• Peanut butter, unsalted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salad dressings, unsalted</li> <li>• Sugar and honey</li> <li>• Vinegar</li> </ul>
*Note: if you have cooked or sprinkled any of the above unsalted food with salt add:		
50 mg sodium for a light sprinkle of salt per food	100 mg sodium for a heavy sprinkle of salt per food	500 mg sodium for 1/4 scant tsp salt added in cooking

Key: Avg = average; g = gram; mg = milligram

### Sodium facts

- Salt is sodium chloride. About 40 percent of salt is sodium and 60 percent chloride.
- One level teaspoon of salt = 5.5 g = 2,132 mg of sodium.
- Removing the salt shaker from the table is one good way of reducing sodium intake.
- People who salt most foods prior to tasting are considered heavy salters. When a high level of sodium is eaten regularly it is difficult to taste low amounts of salt. The high level of sodium in the saliva appears to interfere with tasting the salt. When the salt is lowered in the diet for awhile the ability to taste lower levels of salt appears to return.
- When reading labels for sodium content, look for salt, sodium, monosodium glutamate and sodium added to words like benzoate, etc.
- Sodium may be present in medicines such as aspirin. It may be present in some foods and not listed on the label, like mayonnaise.
- Salt substitutes should not be used unless prescribed by a physician. People with certain medical problems might not be able to use every kind.
- Softened water contains varying amounts of sodium since water softeners work by exchanging sodium for minerals in the water. It is better, therefore, not to use softened water for drinking and cooking purposes because of the sodium content.
- Ninety to 95 percent of the sodium in the body is secreted through the kidneys. Small amounts are lost through sweat.
- When a person sweats a great deal because of exercising in hot weather, sodium and water may be lost to a larger extent than normal. Salt tablets are not recommended since they are too concentrated and slow the absorption of water from intestines into the body. A little extra salt on food usually is sufficient for the athlete. Replacing water during exercise, however, is very important.
- When pregnant a little extra sodium is needed, but the increased food eaten probably will supply it. It is unwise to reduce salt below a normal range during pregnancy unless special circumstances exist.
- Spices, whose names end in "salt," like garlic salt and celery salt, are high in sodium.
- The following spices and flavorings are examples of those low in sodium that may be added to

foods to enhance the taste:

Bay leaf	Garlic	Mint	Pepper
Curry	Ginger	Onions	Pinch of sugar
Dry mustard	Herbs	Paprika	Rosemary
Fruit	Lemon	Parsley	Tomatoes

**Reference** - Sodium values are mostly from *Nutritive Values of Foods*, Home and Garden Bulletin, No. 72, 1986.

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