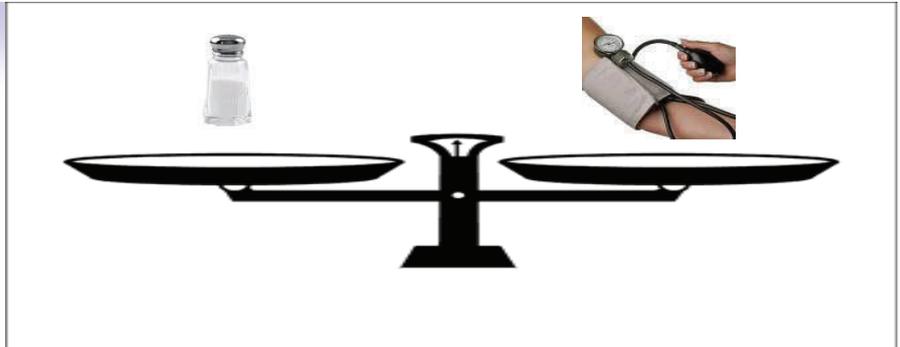


SALT CONSUMPTION

General information

Salt has deep roots in “Greek cuisine” since the times when the Greek households had limited ways available to preserve and add flavour to their food. Refrigeration and freezing have reduced the need to use salt for the preservation of food, but the preference of consuming highly salted food has maintained through the generations.

Adverse effects of excessive salt intake: A high salt intake is associated with the development of **high blood pressure**. People with high blood pressure have a higher risk of developing coronary heart disease, especially stroke, compared to those with normal blood pressure. Salt is a chemical compound



consisting of 40% of sodium (Na) and 60% chlorine (Cl) i.e. **1g of salt is equivalent to 0.4g of sodium**. Sodium is the element implicated in hypertension. Moreover, while sodium is not carcinogenic in itself, high salt intake may increase the risk of stomach cancer in combination with other factors such as for example infection with Helicobacter pylori.

There is a common misconception that a low salt/sodium intake can

be achieved only by simply not adding extra salt at the table. Apart from table salt, many foods contain **hidden added salt or sodium**. Investigations in European countries have shown that 70-75% of sodium in our diet comes from processed foods and meals away from home (with a 10-15% coming from natural unprocessed food and a 10-15% coming from salt added at the table or during cooking).

How much salt per day is recommended by experts?

The minimum amount of sodium that a healthy adult needs is estimated to be 0.18-0.23g per day (under conditions of maximal adaptation and without sweating). However, a diet that provides this amount of sodium is unlikely to be sufficient to meet the needs of other nutrients. Therefore to ensure adequate intake of other nutrients and to replace sodium losses in sweat, healthy adults generally need about 1.5g of sodium per day which corresponds to 3.8g of salt daily. Because it is difficult to achieve such an intake - since



average salt intake in most European countries is around 8-11g daily - a more realistic recommendation by international organizations and national authorities is in the range of 5-6g of salt a day.

Children younger than 11 years should consume even less than 6g salt a day.

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) proposed a labeling reference intake of 6g for salt for the general population. **The World Health Organization has set a target of less than 5g of salt a day.** Greece follows the recommendations of the World Health Organization. The amount of 5g equals to one teaspoon.

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HELLENIC REPUBLIC
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How do I know if a food is high in salt/sodium?

Συστατικό	100g	100ml
ΕΝΕΡΓΕΙΑ	100	80
ΠΡΩΤΕΪΝΕΣ	75g	25g
ΥΔΑΤΗΡΡΑΚΕΣ in total (Σύνολο) H ₂ O	51g	20g
ΛΙΠΗ in total (Σύνολο)	5g	0.5g
ΦΥΤΙΚΑ ΛΙΠΗ	2g	0.4g
ΝΑΤΡΙΟ NaCl	0.35g (0.9%)	0.15g (0.3%)
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΕΣ		(%RNI)
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΗ C	75mg	24%
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΗ B ₁	1.5mg	12%
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΗ B ₂	2mg	12%
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΗ B ₆	22.5mg	75%
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΗ B ₁₂	2.5mg	12%
ΒΙΤΑΜΙΝΗ E	2500g	12%

Read the labels on packaged foods to find foods lower in salt.

If a food contains **more than 0.6g of sodium** (or 1.5g of salt) per 100g, then it is **high** in sodium/salt.

If a food contains **0.1g of sodium** (or 0.3g of salt) **or less** per 100g, then it is **low** in sodium/salt.

If the amount of salt per 100g is between these values, then the food contains a medium level of salt.

A food which contains not more than 0.04g of sodium or an equivalent amount of salt per 100g or 100 ml is “very low in sodium/salt”.

A food which contains no more than 0.005g of sodium or an equivalent amount of salt per 100g or 100 ml is “sodium/salt free”.

Remember that the amount you eat of a certain food has an impact on how much salt you will get from it.

Practical advice on reducing intake of salt/sodium

Remove the salt shaker from the table and do not add salt before you taste the food.

Use **spices and herbs** (e.g. dill, oregano, rosemary, bay leaves) in order to enhance the flavour of foods. You can also sprinkle fresh lemon on cooked meat and vegetables.

Try to eat more fresh raw foods. Frozen fresh vegetables that have not undergone any treatment, do not contain extra salt.

When shopping, remember to read the **labels** of the packaged food you choose. The supply of foods low in sodium is now easier than before. Look for foods low in sodium.

In particular, be careful when choosing sauces and “instant” products which may have high sodium content. **Attention should also be paid to cured meats, cheeses, pickles and pastries with high sodium content.**

Rinse canned foods preserved in brine, before eating.

Rinse olives and feta cheese, which are traditionally used when preparing a Greek salad.

At taverns and restaurants, ask not to add salt to your dish (e.g. French fries, grilled meat/fish and salad).

When you cook pasta or rice, do not add salt to boiling water.

