

SALTS

Eating too much salt is the single biggest cause of high blood pressure.

The more salt you eat, the higher your blood pressure will be.

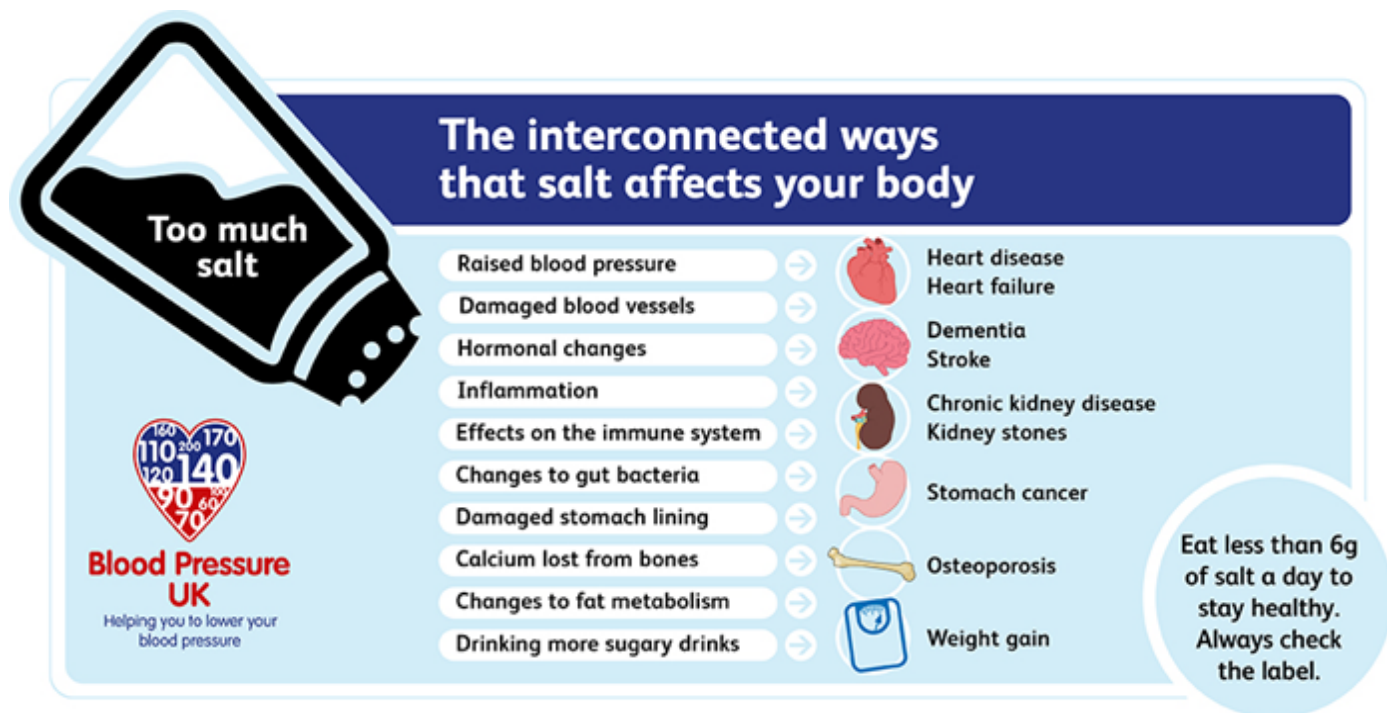
Because salt is often hidden in the foods we buy, it can be hard to know how much you're eating or how to cut back. Here, you can find out how.

How does salt raise your blood pressure?

Salt makes your body hold onto water. If you eat too much, the extra water in your blood means there is extra pressure on your blood vessel walls, raising your blood pressure.

If you already have high blood pressure, too much salt will raise it further, and may mean that any blood pressure medicines you're taking don't work as well as they should. Cutting down on salt is one of the simplest ways to lower your blood pressure, and will start to make a difference very quickly, even within weeks.

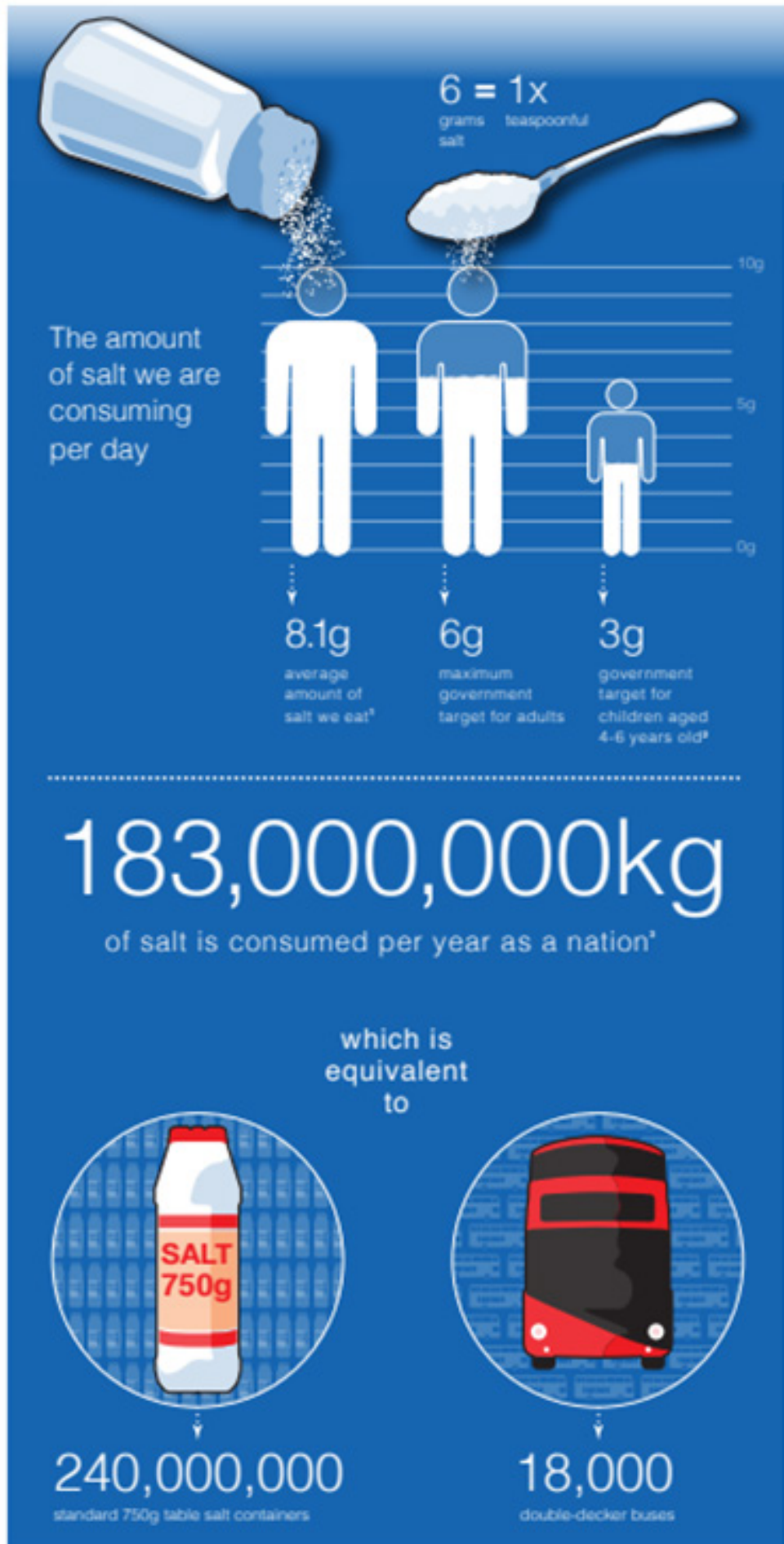
How much salt is too much?



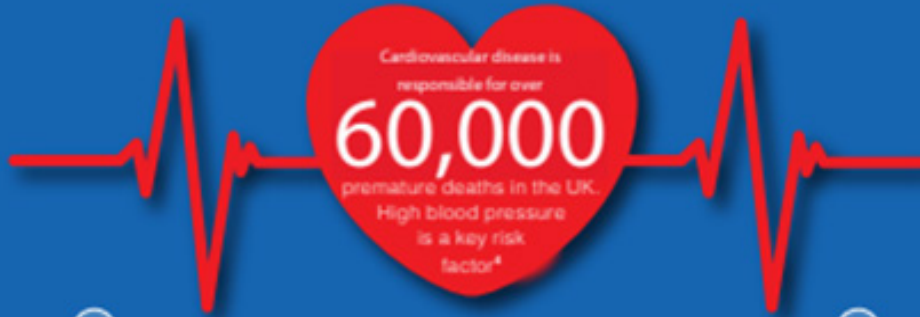
Adults should eat less than 6g of salt a day, but most of us eat much more. The latest figures show we're eating around 8g a day on average.

Most of the salt we eat is hidden in the foods we buy ready-made, like bread, biscuits, breakfast cereals, sauces, and condiments, as well as ready meals and takeaways. This hidden salt accounts for around three quarters (75%) of the salt we eat, only a small amount comes from the salt we add while cooking or at the table.

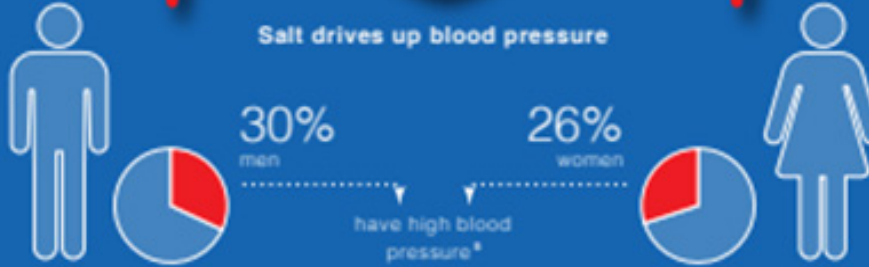
HAVING TOO MUCH SALT?



The damage being done to our health



Salt drives up blood pressure



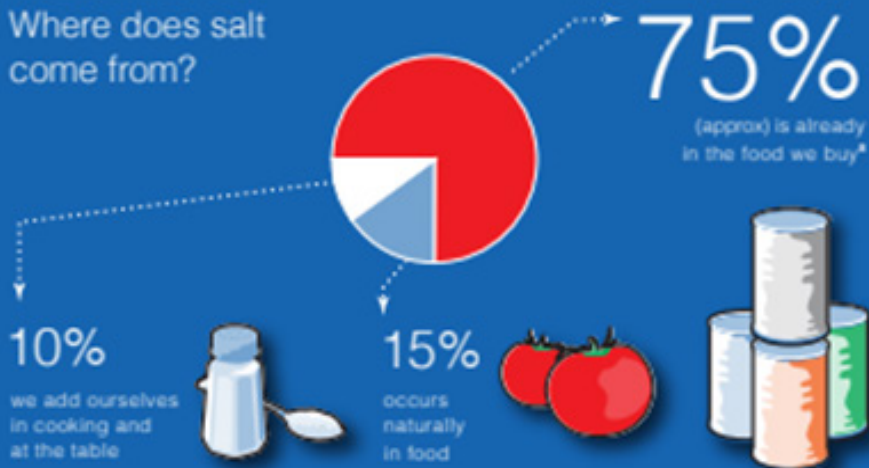
4,147
preventable
deaths

£288m
from NHS
budgets

£30bn
amount
cardiovascular
disease costs
UK economy
per year*

saved each year if we
reduce average salt intake
by 1g*

Where does salt come from?



Industry adds salt to provide:

- taste
- texture
- preservative

Salt can be found in a wide range of foods. Some are almost always high in salt, such as:

- bacon
- ham
- cheddar and other hard cheeses

In other foods, salt levels vary a lot, such as in:

- bread (freshly made, sliced, crumpets, bagels)
- breakfast cereals
- soup and pasta sauces

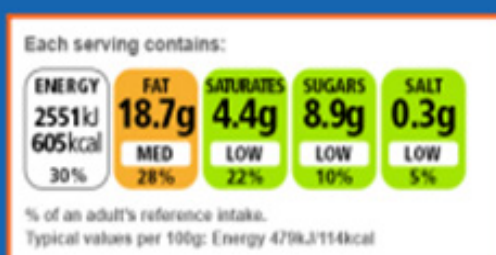
How to cut down on salt: 3 top tips



1

When food shopping, check the label and choose the food that's lower in salt. Look at the figure for salt per 100g (see example food label below):

- High is more than 1.5g salt per 100g. May be colour-coded red.
- Low is 0.3g salt or less per 100g. May be colour-coded green.
- Medium is between 0.3g and 1.5g salt per 100g. May be colour-coded amber.



2

Eat foods high in salt less often and in smaller amounts.

Go easy on condiments and sauces such as ketchup, mustard, soy sauce and pickles as they are high in salt.



3

Cook with less salt.

- When seasoning, use black pepper, fresh herbs and spices instead.
- Make your own stock and gravy instead of using cubes or granules.
- Make sauces with fresh ingredients such as ripe tomatoes and garlic.

Sources

- 1 National Diet and Nutrition Survey: Assessment of Dietary Sodium Levels Among Adults (aged 19-64) in England, 2011.
- 2 Salt and Health, 2009. Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition. Maximum salt target for adults is 6g. Recommended targets for children range from <1g to 4g depending on age.
- 3 Salt intake calculation based on mid-2010 Population Estimates: United Kingdom; estimated resident population by single year of age and sex, data from the Office for National Statistics.
- 4 Scarborough, P et al. Coronary Heart Disease Statistics, 2010. British Heart Foundation.
- 5 Health Survey for England 2010. Health and Social Care Information Centre.
- 6 Department of Health.
- 7 Scarborough, P et al. Coronary Heart Disease Statistics, 2010. British Heart Foundation.
- 8 Data from Why 6g? A summary of the scientific evidence of the salt intake target. © Medical Research Council.

To convert salt to sodium divide by 2.5

To convert sodium to salt multiply by 2.5

For example:

1g salt = 0.4g sodium

0.8g sodium = 2g salt

Salt is sodium chloride and as food labels often list both salt and sodium content, it can be confusing.

Tips For Eating Less Salt

These ideas will help you get started.

- Don't add salt when cooking. Try adding different flavours and allow a little time for your taste buds to adjust.
- Avoid very salty flavourings. Ready-made sauces, soy sauce, stock cubes and gravy granules can all be very salty, look out for low salt options or try some new flavourings.
- Get extra flavour into your recipes. Add herbs, spices and seasonings like chilli, pepper, ginger, lemon, or lime juice.
- Taste food before you add salt. Sometimes people add salt out of habit, remember to taste your meals first.
- Take the saltshaker off the table. So, you're less likely to be tempted.
- Be careful of condiments. The saltshaker's fellow table dwellers can be very salty too, like mustard and ketchup.
- Try a salt alternative. If you really can't do without a salty favour, try using a small amount of a low-sodium salt substitute.
- Cut down on high salt foods. Cooking sauces, table sauces such as ketchup and mustard, cheese, bacon, olives, and pickles can contain a lot of salt.
- Check the labels. Salt contents vary greatly. Check the labels of foods before you buy them and compare with other products – you'll often find lower salt low-salt options.
- Choose low salt bread and breakfast cereals. They can contain a lot of salt and add a lot to our diet – as we eat so much of them. Check the labels to compare brands.
- Avoid smoked and processed meats and These contain a lot of salt, so limit how much you eat.

Helpful Links

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/food-types/salt-in-your-diet/#:~:text=Adults%20should%20have%20no%20more,added%20during%20and%20after%20cooking.>