SALT BY THE NUMBERS

One of the single greatest dietary harms to our health comes from high levels of sodium—mostly from salt—in packaged and restaurant foods.

The average American consumes about this much sodium per day:

4,000 mg
about 1 ¼ teaspoons of salt

Daily maximum above which sodium becomes unhealthy for most healthy young adults:

2,300 mg
about 1 teaspoon of salt

Safe daily limit for African Americans, people over 50, and people with hypertension:

1,500 mg
about ⅛ of a teaspoon of salt

Restaurant Meals Loaded with Sodium

compare to the daily recommended limit of 1,500 mg or 2,300 mg

- Olive Garden Chicken & Shrimp Carbonara, salad, breadstick.............3,400 mg
- Burger King Tender Crisp Chicken Sandwich, large fries....................2,270 mg
- Denny's Grand Slamwich with hash browns....................................3,690 mg
- Uno Chicago Grill Chicago Classic Deep Dish Fizza (individual, with sausage, chunky tomato sauce, mozzarella, romano).....................4,910 mg
- Applebee's Reuben with Fries.................................6,010 mg
- Buffalo Wild Wings Lunch Madness 8 Boneless Wings & Fries...........4,710 mg
Major sources of sodium in the U.S. diet

Some foods contain far more sodium than similar competing brands

- 3½ ounces of French fries
  - McDonald's 231 mg
  - Burger King 371 mg (61% more)
- 2 Tbsp. of BBQ sauce
  - KC Masterpiece Premium Original 240 mg
  - Original Open Pit 510 mg (113% more)
- Macaroni and Cheese frozen entrees
  - Lean Cuisine 201 mg/3½ oz.
  - Banquet 335 mg/3½ oz. (66% more)
- Pepperoni pizza, hand-tossed
  - Little Caesars 452 mg/3½ oz.
  - Pizza Hut 740 mg/3½ oz. (64% more)
- White albacore tuna fish, packed in water
  - Crown Prince 105 mg
  - Walmart Great Value 200 mg (92% more)
Health problems caused by excess sodium

- Strokes
- Dementia
- Congestive heart failure
- Heart attacks
- High blood pressure
- Kidney disease
- Bloating or puffiness (due to water retention)

9 out of 10 U.S. adults will develop high blood pressure in their lifetime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If Americans consumed</th>
<th>Number of lives saved per year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2,200 mg/day</td>
<td>about 90,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the entire population of</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Santa Monica, California</td>
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<tr>
<td>1,500 mg/day</td>
<td>about 120,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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Low-pressure system

11 million fewer people would have high blood pressure if they consumed 2,300 mg of sodium per day. That’s equivalent to the combined populations of Vermont, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oregon.

16 million fewer people would have high blood pressure if they consumed 1,500 mg of sodium per day. That’s equivalent to the combined populations of Vermont, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oregon, Alaska, Utah, and West Virginia.

Read food labels and check the serving size. The FDA considers 120 mg or less per serving to be “low” and 480 mg or more to be “high.”
Ways to reduce sodium intake

Read the label. Look for lower-sodium or no-salt-added brands.

At restaurants, ask servers to ask the cook not to add salt and look online for nutrition information.

Replace salt and salty sauces and dressings with herbs, spices, citrus juice, low-sodium marinades, etc. Add fresh or dried fruit to savory dishes.

Health-care savings (annually) from lowering sodium to:

$2,300 mg/day $1,500 mg/day

$18 billion $26 billion

How much is $26 billion?
It’s equivalent to the combined annual budgets of the:

- WIC (Women-Infant-Children) food program
- National Park Service
- National Endowment for the Arts
- Peace Corps
- National Science Foundation
- Environmental Protection Agency