



TAKING CONTROL OF SALT

to reduce your risk of heart
and circulatory diseases



Salt and heart and circulatory diseases

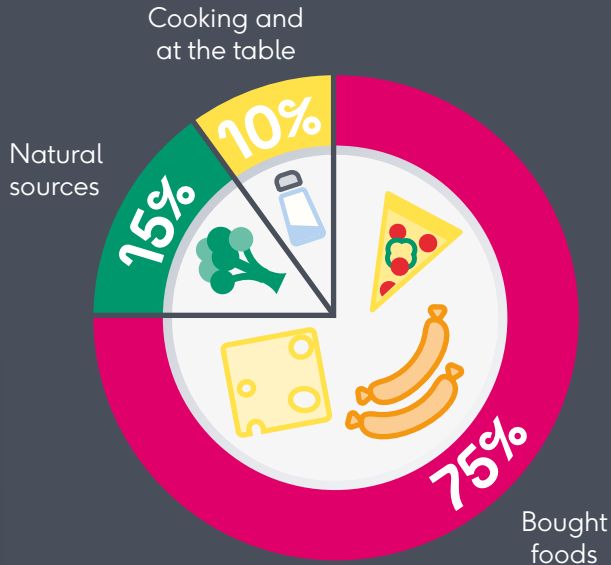
Salt contains sodium, and is where most of the sodium in our diets comes from. Too much sodium can cause high blood pressure which can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Your kidneys help control your blood pressure by taking water out of your bloodstream. Too much sodium in your blood pulls the water back in. This means more water in your blood vessels and higher blood pressure.

High blood pressure means your heart works harder to pump blood around your body. Over time, this makes your blood vessels lose their stretchiness and become stiff and narrow. This narrowing makes it easier for fatty material to clog them up. If the blood vessels that carry blood to your heart or brain get damaged and clogged, it can lead to a heart attack or stroke.

Where does the salt in our diets come from?

Cutting down on salt is an important part of helping you to control your blood pressure. You may think you don't eat much salt, but there's more to it than what you sprinkle on your food. 75% of the salt we eat is already added to the foods we buy. Some have salt in them naturally while others have salt added when they're made.



How much salt is too much?

You should aim to eat no more than **6g of salt a day**. That's about one level teaspoon. This includes salt you add to your food and salt already in it.

Lots of foods don't taste salty but still contain a lot of salt. These can even include sweet foods like cakes and cereals. Prepared foods like ready meals and takeaways often have very high amounts of salt in them.

Foods with hidden salt

Condiments & sauces



Ketchup



Mustard



Sausages



Ham

Snacks



Crisps



Salted nuts



Cereals



Pastries

Savoury & sugary foods

Salt alternatives

There are lots of different types of salt:

- sea salt
- rock salt
- himalayan pink salt
- garlic salt
- kosher salt
- and many more.

No one type is better or worse for you – salt is salt and will have the same effect on your blood pressure.

There are also low salt alternatives – they have less sodium than regular salt. They can be useful for eating less sodium, but they won't help you kick the habit of salty foods, so it's still better to just eat less of it. Check with your doctor before using these salt alternatives, as they contain potassium which aren't suitable for some people with existing health conditions.

Look at labels

Three quarters of the salt we eat has already been added to our food. Keep an eye on hidden salt by reading food labels.

Most packets have colour coded nutritional labels. If you're trying to eat less salt, avoid foods that are coloured **red** for salt, which means the food is high in salt. Choose more **greens** and **ambers** instead.

How much is too much per 100g?

	Low	Medium	High
Salt	0-0.3g	0.3-1.5g	More than 1.5g
Sodium	0-0.1g	0.1-0.6g	More than 0.6g

On some nutrition labels, sodium is listed instead of, or as well as, salt. To convert sodium to salt, you need to multiply the sodium amount by 2.5. It's the sodium part of salt that affects blood pressure.

How to calculate sodium

$$\text{salt} = (\text{sodium}) \times 2.5$$

If the label doesn't say how much salt or sodium the food contains, look at the ingredients list. The closer to the top of the list salt, sodium chloride, monosodium glutamate (MSG), sodium bicarbonate (baking soda) and sodium nitrate (a preservative) appears, the more salt or sodium it's likely to have in it.

Simple swaps

There are little things you can do to help you cut back on salt. These changes may seem small, but in time they can help your salt intake stay low.

- Keep salt away from the table and kitchen counters. If it's not within reach, you're less likely to put it on your food.
- Switch salt for pepper, herbs, spices, and lemon or lime when seasoning.



Salt



Pepper, herbs, spices,
and lemon or lime

- Use low salt options like vegetable cooking juices instead of stock cubes.
- Taste your food before you season it. Gradually reduce your salt intake to readjust your taste buds.
- Instead of adding salt, marinate your meat with citrus fruits, garlic and olive oil.
- Avoid ready-made marinades and seasoning mixes – these are often full of salt.
- Switch salty snacks like crisps for unsalted popcorn.
- Choose unsalted nuts instead of salted nuts.
- Swap salty, processed meats like bacon and sausages for white meats like chicken or turkey.

Easy swaps

Hidden salt can be found in foods we eat often. Make these swaps to keep your salt intake in check.

Breakfast

Higher in salt

Lower in salt



Bacon roll
and ketchup



Egg roll



Sugary,
high-salt cereal



Wheat biscuit
cereal

Lunch

Higher in salt



Ham and cheese sandwich with crisps



Lower in salt



Chicken salad sandwich and fruit



Tinned chicken noodle soup



Chicken and vegetable soup BHF recipe

Dinner

Higher in salt



2 slices of pepperoni pizza



Lower in salt



2 slices of courgette, onion and pepper pizza BHF recipe



Chicken chow mein



Homemade spaghetti bolognese BHF recipe

Easy store cupboard swaps

Fill your cupboards with these lower salt alternatives:

Citrus fruits



Tuna in spring water



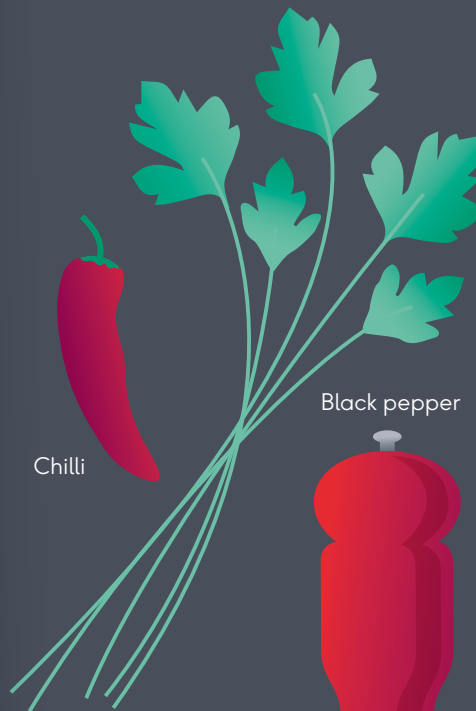
Spices such as paprika, dried herbs, chilli powder



Reduced salt soy sauce



Garlic



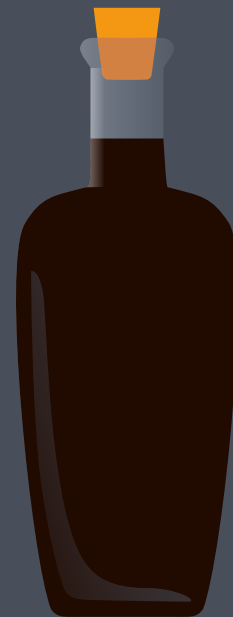
Chilli

Black pepper

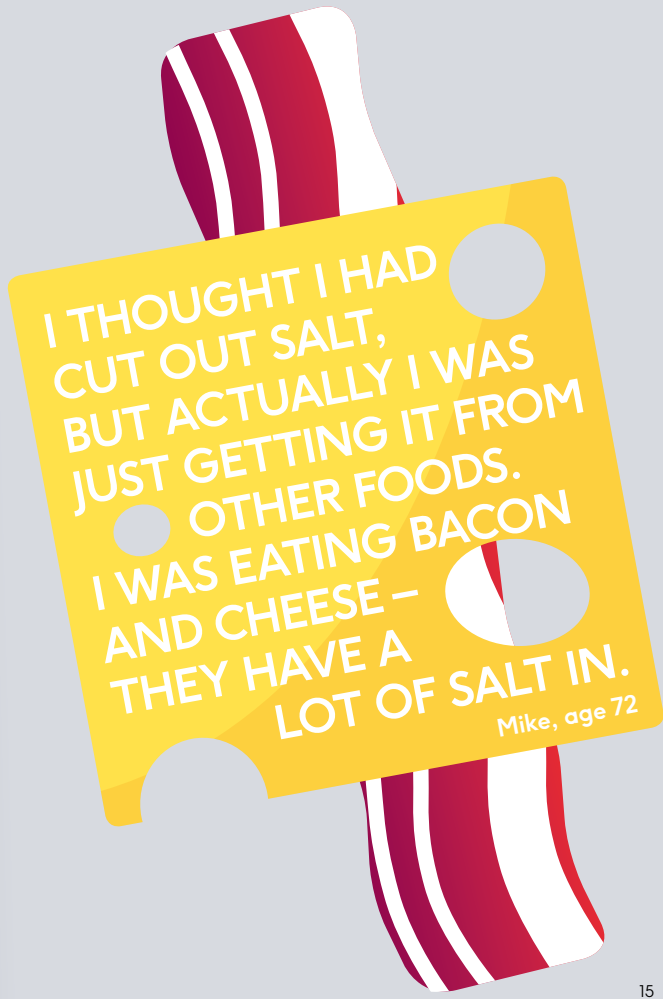


No salt added canned beans or pulses

Herbs such as coriander, basil or parsley



Balsamic vinegar



Try these healthy habits

Putting these healthy habits in place, even just once a week will add up to big changes over a few months.

1. Go meat-free once a week. Processed meats can be high in salt, so try switching it up for vegetable proteins and pulses. Look for tinned beans with no salt added.
2. Bring your own lunch. If you buy a prepared sandwich for lunch every day, you could be eating lots of salt. Make your own fillings such as chicken, egg, mozzarella, instead of ham or cheddar cheese. Try a homemade pasta salad with reduced-fat mayonnaise instead of pickle or mustard one day a week.
3. Make your takeaway favourites at home. Whether it's pizza, sweet and sour chicken, or a spicy curry – these dishes are easy and cheap to make from scratch at home.

4. You can freeze homemade meals so you have a salt-free alternative to takeaways. If you're using shop bought sauces, look at the labels and go for the green.
5. Cut back on cheese. If you have a cheesy favourite you eat often, like cheesy garlic bread or pizza, switch to the cheese-free version or eat it only as an occasional treat. Look at food labels to choose lower salt cheeses like cottage cheese, cream cheese, mozzarella and emmental.

Eating less salt is just one part of eating a balanced diet and maintaining a healthy blood pressure. It's also important to keep a healthy weight, eat more fruit and vegetables, drink less alcohol and be more active.

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Heart and circulatory diseases kill 1 in 4 people in the UK. They cause heartbreak on every street. But if research can invent machines to restart hearts, fix arteries in newborn babies, build tiny devices to correct heartbeats, and give someone a heart they weren't born with – imagine what's next.

We fund research into all heart and circulatory diseases and their risk factors. Heart attacks, heart failure, stroke, vascular dementia, diabetes and many more. All connected, all under our microscope. Our research is the promise of future prevention, cures and treatments.

The promise to protect the people we love. Our children. Our parents. Our brothers. Our sisters. Our grandparents. Our closest friends.

You and the British Heart Foundation. Together, we will beat heartbreak forever.

Beat heartbreak forever.

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