



American Heart Association®

Hard Hats with Heart™



## Toolbox Talks

# How Much Sodium Should I Eat Per Day?

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The American Heart Association recommends no more than 2,300 milligrams (mg) a day and moving toward an ideal limit of no more than 1,500 mg per day for most adults.

On average, Americans eat more than 3,400 milligrams of sodium each day — much more than the American Heart Association and other health organizations recommend. Most of us are likely underestimating how much sodium we eat, if we can estimate it at all.

Keeping sodium in check is part of following an overall healthy eating pattern.

## How do I know how much sodium I'm eating?

You can find the amount of sodium in your food by looking at the Nutrition Facts label. The amount of sodium per serving is listed in milligrams (or mg). Check the ingredient list for words like “sodium,” “salt” and “soda.” The total sodium shown on the Nutrition Facts label includes the sodium from salt, plus the sodium from any other sodium-containing ingredient in the product. For example, this includes ingredients like sodium nitrate, sodium citrate, monosodium glutamate (MSG) or sodium benzoate.

Remember to take note of the serving size on the Nutrition Facts label. If your portion size equals two servings of a product, you're actually eating double the sodium listed.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### Is there such a thing as eating too little sodium?

Worried that you're not getting enough sodium? It's not likely. There's no reliable evidence that eating less than 1,500 mg per day of sodium is a risk for the general population.

The body needs only a small amount of sodium (less than 500 milligrams per day) to function properly. That's a mere smidgen — the amount in less than ¼ teaspoon. Very few people come close to eating less than that amount. Plus, healthy kidneys are great at retaining the sodium that your body needs.

If you have a medical conditions or other special dietary needs or restrictions, you should follow the advice of a qualified healthcare professional.

### Discussion Questions:

- Do you check nutrition labels for sodium?
- What have you tried to reduce your sodium consumption?