

Supermarkets

Supermarkets are playing a greater role in trying to get across the message of a healthy diet. Many of the leading supermarkets are now in the process of lowering the salt content of many of their foods and also making the salt content of the food much clearer on the label. By choosing products that are lower in salt you are highlighting the fact that you as a shopper are aware of salt and its dangers. Some supermarkets are even producing special ranges for children with reduced salt.

How to calculate the salt content of the food

Some labels do give you the salt content of food per serving, but this currently only applies to a small number of foods; other labels on foods give the amount of sodium in grams per 100 grams of food. To convert sodium to salt, you need to multiply the amount of sodium by 2.5.

1 gram of sodium per 100 grams = 2.5 grams salt per 100 grams

Find out the weight of the serving portion in grams, then multiply this amount by the amount of salt per 100 grams in order to work out how much salt is in one portion. Refer to the table on the previous page to find out the maximum amount of salt your child should be eating.

Comments about this leaflet:

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Salt intake and the health of your children



A meal like this contains 7 grams of salt.
Recommended daily intake should not
exceed 6 grams.

Newborn babies

For the newborn and very young too much salt can be dangerous to their health. Salt should never be added to any food that is cooked for your baby. All foods that you buy should be very low in salt. If you are feeding with infant formula milk, rather than breastfeeding, the formula will have been specially formulated so that it contains very little salt. It is important not to make formula milk more concentrated than instructed. Remember breast milk meets all of your newborn baby's nutritional needs.

Weaning

From about 4-6 months your baby will be ready to start accepting small amounts of food. After six months your baby needs more than just breast milk, and by this time you should have started weaning your baby. Weaning products do not have any added salt. On tasting them, particularly if you have a high salt intake, you may find they taste bland. DO NOT add salt to them. If you make your own baby foods, make absolutely sure that you do not add salt to the food. Your baby's kidneys are too immature to cope with any added salt, and this can lead to serious and immediate problems particularly if the baby develops chest or other infections.

Toddlers

By about 9 months your child should start to eat the same foods as the rest of the family. Once again it is important not to add salt to their food. Whilst the food manufacturers have reduced the amount of salt in babies foods to very low levels they have not necessarily done so for toddlers. Indeed many of the snacks and ready-prepared foods for toddlers are very high in salt. Always check the labels and avoid buying these foods.



Pre-school

From the age of 18 months to 3 years your child will be consuming a similar diet to the rest of the household. It is still important that salt is kept to a minimum (max of 2g of salt a day). This will help minimise any health problems due to salt later in life. It is well established that blood pressure increases as we get older in societies where salt intake is high. Therefore, reducing salt intake from a young age should help prevent this rise in blood pressure that occurs with age.

School children

During the school years your child should be eating a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, starchy foods, dairy products, chicken and lean red meat. It is recommended that a child consumes smaller amounts of salt than an adult (see table below). This means that a growing child aged 7-10 years should have no more than 5 grams of salt in a day. Most children greatly exceed this figure because of their high consumption of snacks and instant foods, which are mostly high in salt and saturated fats. Try to limit the amount of snacks and crisps that your child consumes and encourage a greater consumption of fruit.

Salt intake recommendations for children

Age	Target average salt intake
0-6 months	<1g/d
7-12 months	1g/d
1-3 years	2g/d
4-6 years	3g/d
7-10 years	5g/d
11-14 years	6g/d
Adults	6g/d



Watch the salt

Try to understand the labels on the processed foods for your children. If they are not labelled with either the sodium or the salt content do not buy them.

Try to avoid:

- Packet soups
- Instant noodles
- Ketchups and sauces
- Sausages and burgers
- Salty snacks