

ALL ABOUT SALT

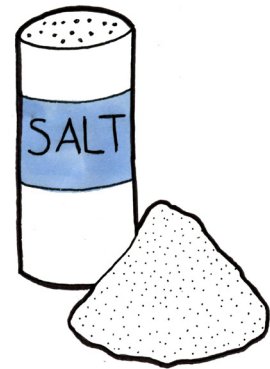


ALL ABOUT SALT

Salt is such an important flavouring. It's found naturally in a lot of foods and added to others as a taste enhancer or preservative.

WHERE DOES SALT COME FROM?

Salt, or sodium chloride, is a natural mineral that occurs in seawater. It is made up of two elements, sodium and chloride. When areas of seawater become enclosed, and the sun evaporates the water, the salt gets left behind in deposits. This coarse salt is called **sea salt** or **rock salt**. **Table** or **kitchen salt** is coarse salt that that's been treated, or refined, in a factory to make it finer and had an anti-caking agent added to it to make it less prone to 'caking' or clumping.



WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT SALT?

Most people in the UK have salt and pepper pots on their kitchen table and don't think twice about seasoning their food with a few pinches here and there. But in recent years the amount of salt we're consuming has started to get a lot of attention because there is a link between too much salt and poor health.

Salt is an essential mineral for the body as it helps to maintain water concentration in the blood. Because there is salt in most manufactured food these days, it is rare for someone to be lacking, or deficient, in salt. If anything, we are eating too much of it. Excess salt consumption is becoming a big problem; it's associated with water retention and high blood pressure, which is in turn a big risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

HOW MUCH SALT SHOULD I BE EATING?

Like most things, the amount of salt you should be eating on a daily basis depends on your age and general health. These are the recommended average daily intake levels in the UK:

Children (aged 4 to 6) = 3 grams

Children (aged 7 to 10) = 5 grams

Adults (anyone aged 11+) = maximum of 6 grams per day (approximately 1 teaspoon).

HOW DO I CHECK THE LEVEL OF SALT IN FOOD?

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has worked closely with food manufacturers to set strict targets for salt. The aim of these targets is to reduce the level of salt added to our food. Look at the nutritional table on food labels (like the example here), and check the salt content. Think about how much extra salt you add to food each day and try to keep within the guidelines as much as possible. Sometimes salt will be labelled only as sodium and measured slightly differently; simply multiply the amount of sodium by 2.5 and this will give you the salt content in grams.

Once you start paying attention to labels, you'll start noticing salt in loads of foods you wouldn't expect it to be in like breakfast cereals and biscuits. It's not a bad idea to check the levels on your favourites and consider switching to lower salt alternatives if you think you're getting too much.

Nutrition Information				Guideline daily amounts		
Typical values (cooked as per instructions)	Per 100g	Per ½ Pizza	% based on GDA for adult	Women	Men	Children (5-12 years)
Energy	1001 kJ 238 kcal	1977 kJ 470 kcal	23.5%	2000 kcal	2500 kcal	1800 kcal
Protein	9.3g	18.4g	40.9%	45g	55g	24g
Carbohydrate of which sugars of which starch	28.7g 2.7g 25.9g	56.7g 5.3g 51.2g	24.7% 5.9% -	230g 90g -	300g 120g -	220g 85g -
Fat of which saturates mono-unsaturates polyunsaturates	9.6g 3.7g 4.0g 1.6g	19.0g 7.3g 7.9g 3.2g	27.1% 36.5% - -	70g 20g - -	95g 30g - -	70g 20g - -
Fibre	2.3g	4.5g	18.8g	24g	24g	15g
Salt of which sodium	1.0g 0.40g	2.0g 0.79g	33.3% 32.9%	6g 2.4g	6g 2.4g	4g 1.4g

SALT AND SEASONING

Jamie says, *"I'm all for seasoning food properly, but I'm also very aware that we need to take more responsibility and really think about how much extra salt we're putting into our food."*

There are ingredients that really benefit from a pinch or two of salt. Tomatoes are one of them: they can be brought to life with a sprinkling of sea salt because it brings out their sweetness and enhances their flavour. Another ingredient that benefits (weirdly) from salt is chocolate: a tiny pinch of salt can bring out the best flavours and somehow make chocolate cakes, brownies, even chocolate sauce more chocolatey. If you're cooking pasta, it's important to always add a good pinch of salt to your cooking water as pasta absorbs flavours as it cooks, not after.

Think about the other ingredients in a dish. If you're using a salty ingredient like bacon, Parmesan cheese or anchovies you probably won't need to add salt.

Ask yourself if you really need to add more salt, or if you're just doing it out of habit. Get into the practice of tasting your food before seasoning to make sure you're only adding extra salt where you really need to.

For more information on salt and seasoning go to:

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/salt.aspx