

The shakedown on salt

By Lilisha Burris, MHSc, RD

When you learned that too much salt is unhealthy, you took the salt shaker off of the table. And you only add salt to the dishes you make on special occasions.

That should be enough, right?

Cutting back on added salt is an important step, however there is much more to know about salt.

Sodium is the main ingredient of salt. We all need some sodium. Too much sodium, however, can lead to high blood pressure. It can also increase your risk for heart disease, stroke, and kidney disease.

Healthy adults over 50 only need about 1300 milligrams (mg) of sodium each day. This is the amount of sodium in about 1/2 teaspoon of table salt.

5 things you can do to help you steer clear of too much sodium

1. Add flavour with spices like paprika, chili, cumin and cinnamon. Or, use herbs like parsley, basil and rosemary. With added flavor, you will continue to enjoy your food while you stay salt-free.
2. Use the nutrition facts table on a food package for helpful hints about sodium. Use the % daily value (%DV) to help you compare products. If the amount of sodium is 5% DV (120 mg) or less, then that food has only a little bit of sodium. If the amount of sodium is 15% DV (360 mg) or more, then that food has a lot of sodium.
3. Choose unprocessed foods whenever you can. Foods that are naturally low in sodium include fresh or frozen vegetables, fruits, whole grains, milk, yogurt, meat, and beans. *Canada's Food Guide* can help you choose balanced amounts of these foods.
4. When eating at a restaurant, ask for your meal to be prepared with no added salt.



Restaurant foods are often prepared with more salt than you would use at home.

5. Remember, salt by any other name ... is still salt. Whether you prefer kosher salt, sea salt, or coarse salt, the guidelines are still the same. These types of salts need to be limited in the same way as table salt.

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Ontario residents can call an EatRight Ontario registered dietitian at **1-877-510-510-2** to talk about their results. They answer questions in over 100 languages. The dietitian can help you plan nutrition goals and practical steps to take action.

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The *Guide to Healthy Eating for Older Adults* highlights important nutrition topics such as healthy weights, vitamin and mineral needs, and eating well to stay healthy.

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Talk to a registered dietitian

Residents of British Columbia can talk to a registered dietitian at Health Link BC for free by calling **8-1-1**.

Residents of Manitoba can talk to a registered dietitian at the Provincial Contact Centre for free by calling **1-877-830-2892**.

About the Author

Lilisha Burris is a registered dietitian with *EatRight Ontario*. Ontario residents can talk to a Registered Dietitian at **EatRight Ontario** for free. We answer questions in over 100 languages. Call toll-free at **1-877-510-510-2** or visit us online at www.eatrightontario.ca.