

## ▶ Cut the Salt

When salt intake is reduced, blood pressure usually decreases within weeks. So a key step to take if you have high blood pressure is to cut your salt intake. It is estimated that about one third of the nearly 8,000 strokes which occur in New Zealand every year are due to high blood pressure. This figure would be greatly reduced if, as a population, we consumed less salt.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SALT INTAKE ARE:

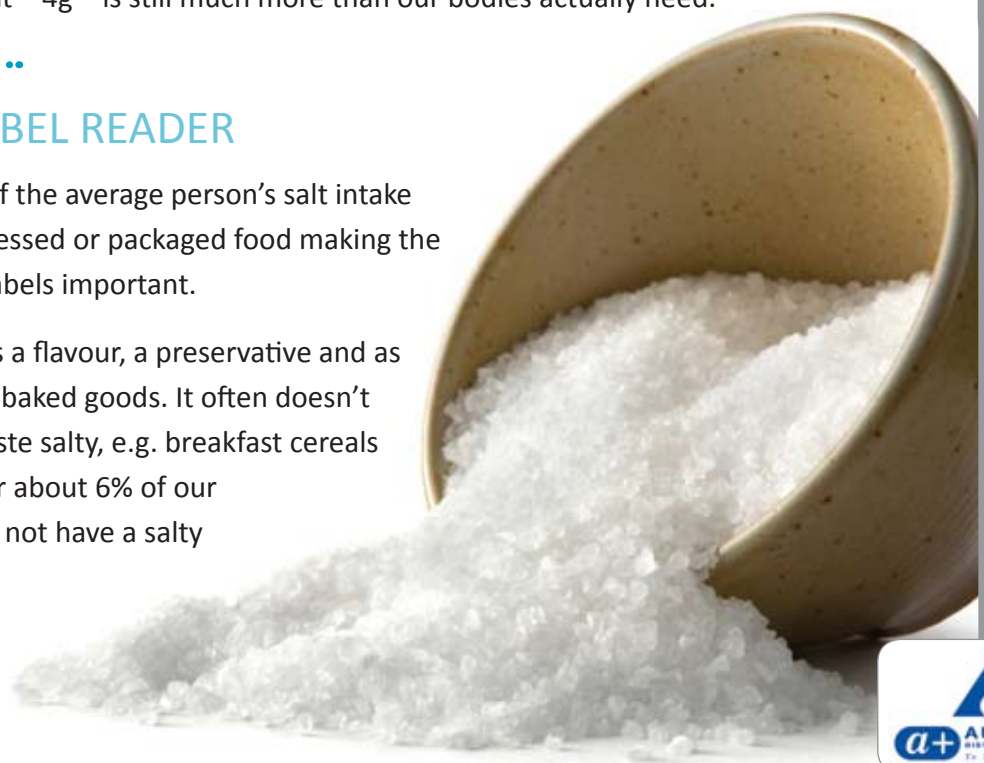
- less than 2,300mg sodium a day (equivalent to a teaspoon or 6g of salt) for all New Zealanders
- 1,500mg (4g salt) or less a day for people with long term health conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure.

### KEY POINTS

- Reaching the target is challenging because most salt is 'hidden' in processed food.
- The average New Zealander has about 9g of salt a day.
- The lower amount – 4g – is still much more than our bodies actually need.

### BECOME A LABEL READER

- More than 75% of the average person's salt intake comes from processed or packaged food making the reading of food labels important.
- Sodium is used as a flavour, a preservative and as a raising agent in baked goods. It often doesn't make the food taste salty, e.g. breakfast cereals which account for about 6% of our sodium intake do not have a salty flavour.



## LABEL READING POINTERS

- A food labelled as 'low salt' is defined by the Australian New Zealand Food Standards Code (FSANZ) as having a sodium concentration of no more than 120mg per 100g.
- Reduced salt means the food must have a limited amount of sodium and have at least 25% less salt/sodium than the comparative standard food.

## NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL (NIP)

The NIP is on the back of the pack and states the sodium content per serving and per 100g of the product. The NIP will capture all the ingredients in the food with a sodium content e.g. sodium chloride (salt), monosodium glutamate, sodium nitrate, sodium ascorbate.

## READING THE NIP

- Concentrate on the 100g column and use this to compare brands.
- Select a brand with the lowest sodium content.
- Consider the size of the serving to assess the impact on your intake, e.g. a breakfast cereal could be a large serving whereas a sauce less than a teaspoon.

## WHICH CEREAL IS LOWER IN SODIUM?

Nutrition Information		
Light 'n' Tasty — Serving size 45g		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy, kj	71	1,580
Protein, g	4.5	10.0
Fat, total, g	2.2	4.8
Carbohydrate, total, g	30.5	67.7
Dietary fibre, g	3.9	8.6
<b>Sodium, mg</b>	114	<b>255</b>

Nutrition Information		
Rice Bubbles (Kellogs) — Serving size 30g		
	Per serve	Per 100g
Energy, kj	480	1,600
Protein, g	1.9	6.2
Fat, total, g	0.1	0.4
Carbohydrate, total, g	26	86.7
Dietary fibre, g	0.3	1.1
<b>Sodium, mg</b>	207	<b>690</b>

This is the better choice  
as it has less sodium per 100g

## SODIUM LOWERING TIPS



- Base meals around fresh food as much as possible.
- Use very little salt in cooking and take the salt shaker off the table. Do not add salt to cooking water for rice or pasta.
- If you use processed food, consider the processing method and check the NIP. For example, frozen vegetables do not have added salt however some canned vegetables do.
- Bread is high in sodium. Compare brands but select wholegrain or mixed grain (ideally fibre more than 5g/100g) in preference to white as wholegrain has other health advantages.
- Use a low salt margarine or spread.
- Many crackers and crisp breads are higher in sodium than bread and do not make a good substitute.
- Consider making your own muesli or having porridge as a breakfast choice; oats have almost no sodium (9mg/100g).
- Herbs and spices add taste – experiment and find the flavours that you like. Dill, basil, mint, coriander, sage, and oregano are all worth trying. Use 2-3 times more fresh herbs than dried herbs in a recipe.
- Balsamic and fruit vinegars, lemon and orange juices and rind, pepper varieties, wasabi, garlic and ginger all add zest to meals.
- Takeaway and restaurant food is usually very high in sodium. This could be because standard ingredients are high in sodium (e.g. pizza with tomato base, cheese, ham or salami, capers, olives) or condiments (e.g. Thai with Fish sauce, Chinese with soya sauce). Chefs also tend to be heavy salt users. Keep takeaways and fast foods to an occasional treat and choose as low salt as you can if you do dine out frequently.

▶ You will get used to eating food with less salt – give your taste buds about six weeks to adapt.

## BALANCE A LOW SODIUM APPROACH WITH OTHER HEART HEALTHY GUIDELINES

- Include plenty of colourful vegetables and fruit.
- Use heart friendly polyunsaturated or monounsaturated oils and spreads (for example olive, canola, sunflower instead of saturated fats which clog arteries (e.g. butter, lard, ghee, or vanaspati).
- Don't give up wholegrains (bread and cereals) but find the lowest in sodium that you enjoy.
- Use low fat milk and milk products.
- Include lean meat, skinless chicken, fish (twice) and legumes (beans, lentils) over your weekly menu.
- Slot in daily physical activity.

▶ Remember any salt you do use at home should be iodised.

