

# Eating less salt

## Information for patients with kidney disease

**This leaflet explains the benefits of eating less salt and suggests how you can reduce the amount of salt in your diet.**

### Why should I eat less salt?

Eating too much salt can raise your blood pressure – this can increase your risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney failure. If you already have kidney or heart disease, too much salt in your diet can make it difficult to control the fluid in your body. This can lead to symptoms including:

- puffy face and ankles (oedema)
- shortness of breath
- fluid around your heart and lungs.

Reducing the amount of salt in your diet can prevent these symptoms. The advice for kidney disease patients is **to have less than 1 teaspoon (6g) of salt** per day.

### Where does salt come from?

Most people get three quarters (75%) of salt from the processed food we eat such as soups, breakfast cereals, processed meats, bread and ready meals. The other quarter is added in cooking or at the table.

You can reduce your salt intake by:

- eating more fresh and unprocessed foods

- avoiding adding salt to your food while cooking or at the table
- choosing reduced salt foods and sauces.

## Will my food taste bland?

Once you begin to eat less salt your taste buds will adjust in a few weeks. Vinegars, fresh and dried herbs and spices, lemon juice, mustard powder, garlic, chilli and onion all create flavour without salt.

Do not take salt substitutes such as LoSalt, Solo or So Low. They contain potassium, and are therefore dangerous for people with kidney disease.

## Food labels

Salt is often labelled as sodium. To convert sodium to salt, multiply the amount of sodium by two and a half; for example, **0.4g sodium x 2.5 = 1g salt.**

Many products in large supermarkets are labelled with ‘**traffic light**’ colours. This shows you at a glance if the food has high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) amounts of salt (and other nutrients) in **100g of the food**. Choose foods that are labelled green for salt whenever possible.

## Guideline to salt content on food packaging (per 100g)

	Low	Medium	High
<b>Sodium</b> ( Per 100g )	Less than <b>0.12 g</b>	<b>0.12 g - 0.6 g</b>	More than <b>0.6 g</b>
<b>Salt</b> ( Per 100g )	Less than <b>0.3 g</b>	<b>0.3 g - 1.5 g</b>	More than <b>1.5 g</b>

Back of pack labels are useful for comparing the salt content between different packs of processed products. For example supermarkets own breakfast cereals are often lower in salt than branded cereals.

## What foods should I eat and what should I limit?

Limit these foods – choose only occasionally	Choose these foods more often
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Processed and tinned meats (such as luncheon meat, corned beef, tongue, meat paste)</li> <li>• Bacon, gammon, ham</li> <li>• Sausages, burgers, pork pies, black pudding, salami, meat pies and patties</li> <li>• Samosas, pakoras</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh and frozen meats such as lamb, pork, beef, mince, chicken, turkey</li> <li>• Lentils and other pulses/beans (rinse in fresh water if tinned)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish tinned in brine (such as tuna, sardines)</li> <li>• Shellfish, anchovies</li> <li>• Smoked fish (such as salmon, haddock, kippers)</li> <li>• Salt fish</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish tinned in water (such as tuna)</li> <li>• Fresh/frozen fish such as cod, haddock, plaice, trout, salmon</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parmesan, feta, edam, gouda, blue cheese</li> <li>• Processed cheese spread, triangles or slices</li> <li>• Limit Cheddar, red Leicester or brie to 60g per week <b>or</b> cottage cheese to 120g per week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cream cheese, ricotta cheese, Quark</li> <li>• Fromage frais</li> <li>• Eggs</li> <li>• Yoghurt*, cream, ice-cream</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cornflakes</li> <li>• Cheese/salted biscuits</li> <li>• Salted popcorn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pasta, rice</li> <li>• Cereals such as Weetabix, Puffed Wheat, Shredded Wheat, porridge</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bread: no more than 4 slices a day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain crackers and sweet biscuits*</li> <li>• Plain /sweet popcorn*</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetables tinned in brine</li> <li>• Instant mashed potato</li> <li>• Ordinary baked beans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables, salad vegetables</li> <li>• Vegetables tinned in water</li> <li>• Reduced salt baked beans*</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salted crisps, nuts and savoury snacks, such as Bombay mix, or poppadoms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsalted crisps and nuts</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tinned, packet and fresh bought soups</li> <li>• Instant noodles (such as pot noodles)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homemade soup using fresh ingredients and low salt stocks</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stock cubes, Maggi cubes/sauce, gravy granules, gravy salts, salted seasonings/all-purpose seasonings</li> <li>• Marmite, Bovril</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Herbs, spices, pepper, vinegar, lemon juice, garlic, mustard powder, chilli, onion, pepper</li> <li>• Reduced salt stock cubes/powders</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tomato ketchup, salad cream, pickles, brown sauce, mayonnaise, soy sauce</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No added salt salad dressings and ketchups</li> <li>• Homemade salad dressings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Olives and pickles in brine</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Olives and pickles in reduced salt (such as beetroot)</li> </ul>

\* People with diabetes should choose 'low sugar' or 'no added sugar' varieties

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the nutrition and dietetics department on **020 7188 4128** (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

If we are unable to take your call please leave us a message and we will call you back.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets](http://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets)

## Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

**t:** 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

## Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

**t:** 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** [pals@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@gstt.nhs.uk)

**t:** 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** [complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk)

## Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

**t:** 020 7188 8815 **e:** [languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk](mailto:languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk)

## NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day. **t:** 111

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