

Healthy choices - low salt shopping guide

Struggling to know what's in your food? Use this guide to reduce your intake of salt and saturated fat. Remember to keep an eye on your portion sizes.

Limit these foods

They are usually high in salt and/or saturated fat
Eat only occasionally or as a treat

Bread, cereals and starchy foods

Sandwiches filled with cheese and/or processed meat
Pizzas;
Pot noodles and instant noodles

Eggs and dairy

Whole milk, cream, soured cream and crème fraiche; Coconut cream/milk; Most cheeses e.g. cheddar, brie, stilton, parmesan, cream and processed cheese; Quiches

Fats and oils

Some fats e.g. butter, ghee, dripping, lard and suet;
Some oils e.g. palm and coconut oil
Pastry

Meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives

Processed meat e.g. pâté, ham, bacon, gammon, corned beef, burgers, sausages
Meat pies and sausage rolls
Smoked fish; Prawns & shellfish; Tinned anchovies & tuna in brine Vegetarian and meat free sausage rolls, pies and bacon

Fruits and vegetables

Vegetable pies
Some pre-prepared vegetable dishes

Desserts and sweet snacks

Cakes, cheesecake and ice-cream; Most pastry- or cream-based desserts; Hot chocolate made with milk or cream
Confectionary e.g. fudge, chocolate, toffee, sweets; Sweet biscuits

Savoury snacks

Salted popcorn, crisps and salted or roasted nuts
Sour cream- and mayonnaise-based dips and cheese dips
Cheese flavoured biscuits
Olives; sundried tomatoes

Cook-in sauces, table sauces and seasonings

All types of salt e.g. rock, sea and table salt; Stock cubes; Spreads e.g. yeast extract (Marmite), chocolate spread, peanut butter; Table sauces e.g. soy, horseradish, bread and BBQ sauce, ketchup, mayonnaise, salad cream and mustard; Tabasco sauce; Curry paste; Pesto

Check the label!

These foods can contain some salt and/or saturated fat
Choose lower salt options

Bread, cereals and starchy foods

Most breakfast cereals e.g. puffed rice, corn flakes, bran flakes, muesli and wheat biscuits
Bread including rye and soda; Most sandwiches
Processed pasta e.g. tinned in sauce, filled and pasta salad

Eggs and dairy

Semi skimmed milk, soya milk including flavoured and soya cream yoghurt and low fat crème fraiche
Cottage cheese and low fat cream cheese; Mozzarella
Eggs

Fats and oils

Low fat spreads

Meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives

Breaded poultry; Extra lean mince; Meat-based soup and ready meals
Fish cakes, fish in batter or crumbs, fish in sauce; Tinned fish in oil
Vegetarian sausages and burgers and meat free ready meals;
Quorn

Fruits and vegetables

Pickled vegetables; Processed potatoes e.g. croquettes, waffles and oven chips; Baked beans; Tinned vegetables with salt added; Tinned fruit in syrup
Prepared salads; Vegetable soup and ready meals

Desserts and sweet snacks

Fruit buns; Frozen yogurt; Fruit crumble; Jelly; Fruit trifle;
'diet' desserts e.g. light chocolate mousse
Some sweet biscuits e.g. jaffa cakes, rich tea; reduced fat biscuits
Cereal bars, breakfast pots (yogurt-based)

Savoury snacks

Flavoured breadsticks and low salt crisps; Crispbreads, oatcakes and flavoured rice cakes; Savoury crackers and biscuits
Dried wasabi peas
Most vegetable- or pulse- based dips e.g. hummus and guacamole

Cook-in sauces, table sauces and seasonings

Low salt stock cubes; Gravy
Pasta and curry sauces;
Packet sauces e.g. bread, cheese and onion sauce;
Chutneys & pickles

Low salt options

Lower in salt and/or saturated fat
Try and choose these foods

Bread, cereals and starchy foods

Some breakfast cereals e.g. shredded wheat, porridge oats and muesli with no added salt
Grains e.g. couscous, bulgar wheat, quinoa, gnocchi, rice and pasta Potatoes and plantain

Eggs and dairy

1% fat milk, skimmed milk, light soya milk and light soya cream;
Low fat/ fat free yoghurt, soya yogurt

Fats and oils

Some oils e.g. olive, rapeseed, canola, peanut/groundnut, sunflower, sesame and corn oils

Meat, fish and vegetarian alternatives

Fresh, lean meat and white and oily fish;
Tinned fish in water
Soya mince and tofu

Fruits and vegetables

Fresh, frozen and dried fruits, vegetables and pulses
Tinned fruit and vegetables with no added salt

Desserts and sweet snacks

Sugar free jelly; low fat yoghurt; rice pudding
Fruits and fruit salad, ready prepared fruit snacks; dried fruit

Savoury snacks

Unsalted popcorn; Rice cakes; Plain breadsticks
Unsalted nuts and seeds (in moderation); No added salt crisps
Salsa dips

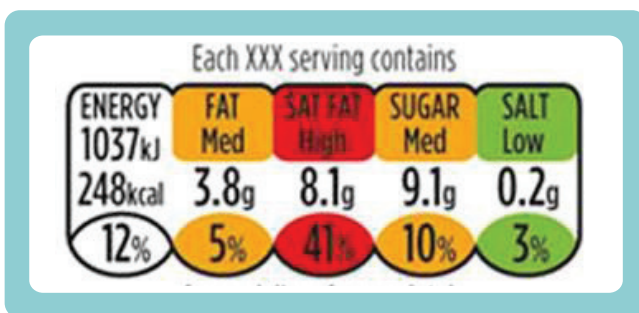
Cook-in sauces, table sauces and seasonings

Vinegar, lemon juice and wine
Herbs and spices; Tomato puree
Apple, cranberry and mint sauce

Check the label!

About three quarters of the salt we eat is hidden in processed foods. Checking food and drink labels means you can see how much salt you and your family are eating. This guide should help you to understand the labels.

Labels on the front of food and drink packaging show simple information about the calories, fat, saturated fat (saturates), sugars and salt content. The amounts will be given 'per portion' in grams, along with colour coding and Reference Intakes.



Colour coding

'Traffic light' labelling makes it easy to see at a glance if a product is high (red), medium (amber) or low (green) in certain nutrients, including salt.

GREEN

Indicates that a product contains low amounts of this nutrient. The more green circles, the healthier the choice.

AMBER

Indicates that a product contains medium amounts of this nutrient, so it's an OK choice most of the time.

RED

Indicates that a product contains high amounts of this nutrient, so enjoy this choice once in a while, or as a treat.

Get into the habit of comparing similar products and choose those with more greens and ambers and fewer reds for a healthier diet.

Portion and Serving Sizes

Where portion sizes are given, see if it is how much you are actually eating. E.g if a portion is stated as half of a product (e.g. pizza), but you eat the whole product, you will need to multiply the provided salt content by 2.

Reference Intakes

Reference Intakes (RI's) are general guidelines for the maximum amount you should eat in a day (6g of salt), given as a percentage (%). If you are buying for children, remember that the RI for a child is far lower than for adults.

When salt is only given per 100g, you will need to work out how much salt will be contained in a portion. You can do this by thinking about how much of the product you or your child will be eating in relation to both the pack size and 100g. Look at the weight of the packet as a guide.

How much salt?

Use the key below to determine whether your food contains a high, medium or low amount of salt.



Frequently asked questions:

The traffic light colours for salt have changed on some of my favourite products. Why is this?

It doesn't necessarily mean the recipes have changed, the criteria used for the traffic light colours has been updated.

What are the Reference Intakes of salt for children and adults?

Adults should eat less than 6 g a day, and children much less. Babies 0-6 months should not be given any salt.

Is sodium the same as salt?

No, sodium is not the same as salt, it is in fact just a part of salt (sodium chloride). When only sodium data is given you will have to convert this to salt by multiplying the figure by 2.5.

Do I need to check the label every time I go shopping?

Look for your favourite brands, compare it with another product and choose the lower salt option. Next time you go shopping, you don't need to do it again! You can even do this at home by looking in your food cupboards and on supermarkets websites.

Can I find out how much salt is in my food when I'm eating out?

Unfortunately that's not easy, you can ask your server if they know how much salt is in your food, but we think it's best to ask for 'Less Salt Please!'

How about food cooked at home?

Make sure your ingredients have lots of 'green label ingredients', like herbs, spices, garlic, chili and lemon. Don't add salt to your cooking or at the table, and you will have a low salt meal!

Is there an easy way of finding how much salt is in my food?

Yes! Try our smartphone App, FoodSwitch! FoodSwitch is available to download for free from iTunes and Google Play.

