

Salt and your kidneys

What is salt?

Salt is a naturally occurring substance made of sodium and chloride. Salt is found in the ground in water, in many foods, and in your body.

Common types of salt include table salt, iodised salt, sea salt, and kosher salt. Salt is also the main ingredient in Himalayan salt, vegetable salt, many stock cube powders, and soy sauce.

Salt and your body

Your body is mostly water, and salt (sodium) helps keep that water in balance. Salt is important because it works with water to help control blood pressure and muscle movement.

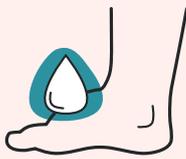
Your kidneys manage how much water and salt you have. When you eat too much salt, your kidneys hold on to extra water and reduce the amount of urine (wee) that is made. This extra water then increases the amount of blood in your body, which can make your blood pressure go up.



How does salt affect your health?

Sodium is important to control your blood pressure, but you need the right amount. Too much sodium can increase your blood pressure and cause damage to your heart and kidneys.

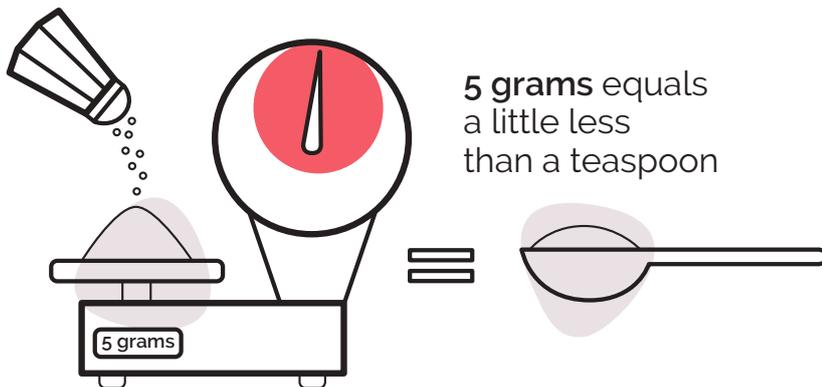
If you have chronic kidney disease, your kidneys have trouble removing excess salt and you may have fluid retention, where water builds up in your body. This can lead to:



- High blood pressure.
- Swelling of ankles, feet, or hands.
- Shortness of breath.

How much salt should I eat?

Salt was originally added to preserve food when we did not have fridges. Our taste buds have become used to foods with added salt. Foods without salt may taste bland if we are used to a lot of salt in the diet. That's why processed foods and restaurants have a lot of salt in them - to make food taste better!



We should eat no more than **5g (1 teaspoon of salt)** per day but this includes salt from all sources – fresh and packaged foods as well as at the table. To avoid eating too much salt, you should do the following:

- 1 Choose fresh and unprocessed food.
- 2 Make smart choices with your packaged foods.

Smart choices with packaged foods

Unfortunately, Australians get most of their salt from packaged foods and not by adding it at the table. This means that even if you are frugal with the table salt, you might still be eating a lot from packaged foods. Processed foods with a lot of salt include:

- processed meats such as ham, corned beef, salami
- pre-made and ready to eat sauces
- cheese
- cakes, biscuits, muffins
- salty snacks like chips, popcorn, and pretzels
- spreads and dips
- fast food and takeaway foods.

Restaurant foods can also contain lots of salt. Ask your server to have the chef hold the salt when going out to eat. If eating fast food, you can look up the nutrition information for certain fast-food places on the company's website beforehand so you can order low-sodium options.



Reading labels for salt

All packaged foods sold in Australia need to have:

1 A Nutrition Information Panel (NIP).

NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Servings per package: 20		
Serving size: 150 g		
	Average Quantity per Serving	Average Quantity per 100 g
Energy	1450 kJ	969 kJ
Protein	9.6 g	6.4 g
Fat, total	1.8 g	1.2 g
- saturated	0.9 g	0.6 g
Carbohydrate	70.1 g	46.7 g
- sugars	0.6 g	0.4 g
Sodium	555 mg	370 mg

This food has **370mg** of sodium per 100g, making it an okay choice. You can use these to help you make better food choices for your kidney disease.

Look for sodium on the nutrition information panel and compare it with similar products. Look for 'no-added-salt, salt reduced or low salt.' When buying packaged brands, check the 'per 100g' column for sodium to help select items mostly from the following groups:

- A 'reduced salt' product contains less than **400mg sodium per 100g.** ✓ **good choice**
- A 'low salt' product contains less than **120mg sodium per 100g.** ✓ **best choice**

2 An ingredients list.

Sodium is found in many ingredients listed under the Nutrition Information Panel. Other names for salt include:

- salts
- sodium vegetable oil / fat
- rock salt / sea salt / garlic salt
- MSG / monosodium glutamate
- sodium bicarbonate
- sodium lactate
- stock cubes
- baking powder
- baking soda.

Remember - aim for less than 5 grams of salt per day. 5 grams of salt = ~2000mg of sodium.



5 tips to reduce salt in your diet

Follow these easy tips to reduce salt in your diet:

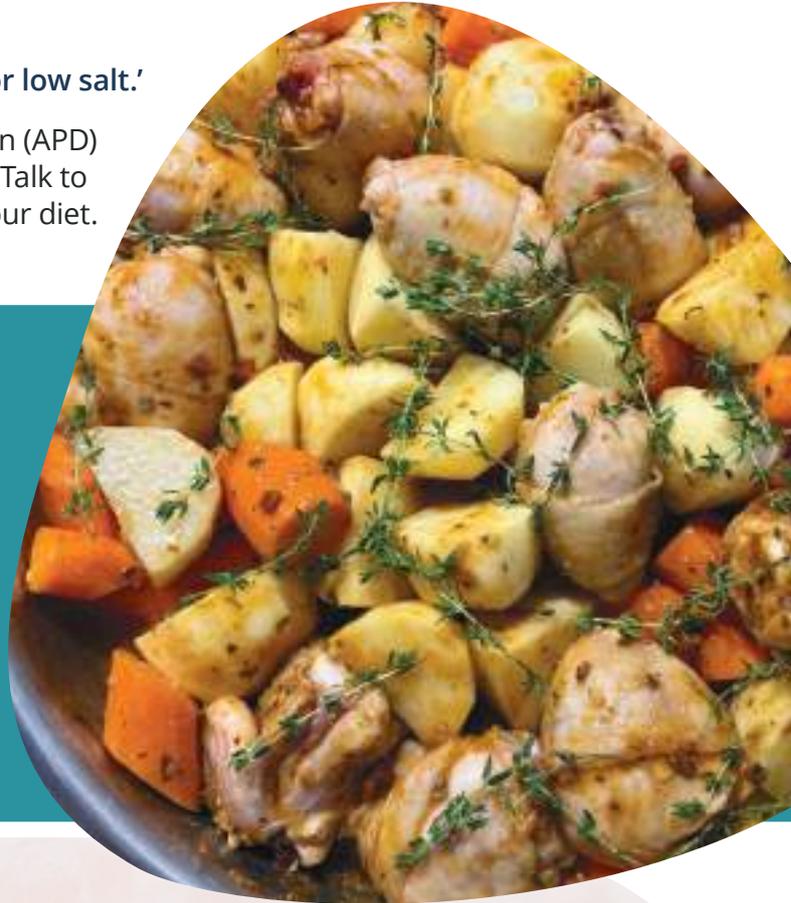
- Ditch the salt shaker - don't add salt at the table.
- Choose fresh and frozen foods instead of canned foods.
- Season with spices and herbs instead of salt.
- Avoid fast food and processed foods.
- Find labels with 'no-added-salt, salt reduced or low salt.'

Need more help? An Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) can help you change your diet to fit your lifestyle. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about ways to improve your diet.

Spice up your life!

Adding herbs and spices makes your food flavourful without the salt. Try some of these to give your food flavour:

- Herbs: basil, oregano, coriander.
- Spices: chilli, paprika, garlic.
- Lemon or lime juice.
- Vinegar.



What about salt substitutes?

There are a range of packaged food products now available that are labeled as reduced salt. Some of these may include ingredients called salt substitutes.

Salt substitutes usually refer to a compound made of potassium and chloride instead of sodium and chloride. Studies have shown these can be very useful to reduce the chance of a stroke or lower blood pressure for people with earlier stages of kidney disease.

If you have more advanced kidney disease, these products are not recommended. Check with your dietitian or doctor if you are unsure. You may need to avoid products with salt substitutes if you have had a history of hyperkalaemia (high blood potassium) or are taking blood pressure medicine.

**Remember,
herbs and spices
are a great alternative
to salt to season
your foods.**



Things to remember:

- ✓ Salt in your diet affects your **blood pressure** and fluids in your body. Your kidneys help to balance water and salt.
- ✓ Too much salt is not good for your kidneys or heart health.
- ✓ Processed foods have high salt content. To reduce salt in your diet, **read the nutrition label**, stick to foods <120mg sodium per 100g, and choose fresh foods over processed foods.

What does that word mean?

Accredited Practising Dietitian (ADP) – A person who is professionally qualified to give practical diet and nutrition advice.

Blood pressure – The pressure of the blood in the arteries as it is pumped around the body by the heart.

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) – Progressive reduction in kidney function or kidney damage which is present for at least three months.

Hyperkalaemia – High potassium levels in the blood. Too much potassium can lead to diarrhea, heart issues, and muscle weakness.

Kidneys – Most people have two kidneys, each about the size of an adult fist and weighing 150 grams. Inside each kidney there are about one million tiny units called nephrons. The nephrons are the part of the kidney that filters the blood. Each nephron is made up of a very small filter called a glomerulus. As blood passes through the nephron, water and waste products are removed. *(continued)*

Most of the water returns to the blood and the waste products collect in the bladder then leave the body as urine (wee). Most kidney diseases attack the nephrons.

Potassium – A mineral in your body that is controlled by your kidneys. It helps nerves, muscles and other cells work well. At very high levels, it may cause your heart to stop.

Sodium – An essential nutrient that regulates blood volume, blood pressure and water in the body. Also called salt.

Special Thanks! This educational resource is supported by a sponsorship provided by Boehringer Ingelheim

 **Kidney Health**
Australia

Free Kidney Helpline 1800 454 363
kidney.org.au

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, contact the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 or relayservice.com.au. Have them connect you to the Free Kidney Helpline - 1800 454 363 



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LEARN MORE?**



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