



Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Salt and Sodium

This tip sheet provides information on the sodium content of different types of salt, instructions for calculating sodium content from added table salt in a recipe, and definitions for sodium content claims on food labels.

Salt and Sodium: Defined

The words "salt," "table salt," and "sodium" are often used interchangeably, they are not entirely the same. Table salt (also known by its chemical name, sodium chloride) is a crystal-like compound that is abundant in nature. Sodium is a mineral, and one of the chemical elements found in salt.

Sodium Content in Different Types of Salt

Most recipes call for added salt, which increases the amount of sodium per serving. For Older Americans Act (OAA) Title III-C meal providers, the exact sodium content in each meal may be unclear, especially when using different types of salt. The most common salt types are table, kosher, Himalayan, and sea. Salt with coarse or large crystals provides less sodium, per teaspoon of salt, than fine or small crystals. Sodium content can also vary widely by brand.

Sodium content in 1 teaspoon of four types of salt.

- **Table Salt:** 2,330 mg
- **Fine Himalayan Pink Salt:** 2,200 mg
- **Fine Sea Salt:** 2,120 mg
- **Coarse Kosher Salt:** 1,920 mg

Source: [Salt and Sodium](#), Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health.

Calculating Sodium Content for Recipes Used in Meals

Reference your state unit on aging's specific requirements regarding sodium content of foods and meals. Use the table and sample calculations below to identify sodium content, from added salt, in recipes.

Sodium Calculation Example

A recipe that makes eight servings calls for 2 teaspoons of table salt.

- Divide the total amount of added salt by the total number of servings.
 - EX: 2 teaspoons ÷ 8 servings = ¼ teaspoon of salt per serving
- Per the table above, 1 teaspoon contains 2,330 mg sodium. Divide that amount by four to calculate the amount of sodium in ¼ teaspoon.
 - EX: 2,330 mg ÷ 4 = 583 mg sodium
- Each serving contains 583 mg of added sodium.

Sodium and Food Labels

In 2021, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued final guidance to reduce sodium in commercially processed, packaged, and prepared food by 2024. The approach provides the industry with targets for reducing sodium and provides companies with flexibility and time to meet the goals. Since more than 70% of sodium intake is from sodium added during manufacturing and commercial food preparation, this is an important step.

Nutrient content claims on food labels provide information on sodium levels in products. Understanding these terms will help local service providers select appropriate products to control sodium levels in meals. Excess sodium intake is linked to hypertension, a leading cause of heart disease and stroke. So, to promote the health and well-being of older adults, it is important to consider the sodium content in OAA Title III-C meals.

Table 1: Nutrient Content Claims for Sodium

What the Label Says	What the Term Means
Sodium Free	Less than 5 mg of sodium per serving
Very Low Sodium	35 mg of sodium or less per serving
Low Sodium	140 mg of sodium or less per serving
Reduced Sodium	At least 25% less sodium than the regular product
Light in Sodium or Lightly Salted	At least 50% less sodium than the regular product
No Salt Added or Unsalted	No salt is added during processing, but these products may not be salt/sodium free

Source: [Sodium in Your Diet](#), FDA

Tips for Reading Food Labels

- Look for the FDA terms outlined in the table above when shopping.
- Compare sodium content with other food products using the Nutrition Facts label.
- Read the Nutrition Facts label to identify and compare the sodium level of products.
- Apply the 5/20 Guide to the Daily Values (DV) on the Nutrition Facts label to help identify higher and lower sodium foods (5% DV per serving is considered low; 20% DV is considered high).

Resources

[Sodium in Your Diet](#): FDA webpage with tips on reducing sodium, using Nutrition Facts labels, and more.

[FoodData Central Salt, Table](#): USDA tool that provides nutrient content for various amounts of salt. This data system can be used to search for other ingredients and foods.