



## High sodium hidden in all sorts of foods

**I recently read something about bread having a lot of sodium in it. Really, bread? I find that hard to believe.**

While one slice of bread may or may not have much sodium (it can range anywhere from 80 to 230 milligrams per slice), the category of “bread and rolls” did, in fact, land at the top of the list of sources of sodium in the American diet in a recent analysis by the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention.

How so? Bread is so ubiquitous in the American diet that even relatively smaller amounts add up quickly.

Still, most people would be hard-pressed to call bread a “salty” food. That just shows how sodium can hide in foods we would never think of as being high-salt.

On average, Americans consume about 3,300 milligrams of sodium per day, 1,000 milligrams more than the maximum of 2,300 recommended by the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. The limit is even lower — 1,500 milligrams — for anyone 51 and older, anyone who is African-American, or anyone who has high blood pressure, diabetes or chronic kidney disease. Although not everyone is “salt-sensitive,” there’s more and more evidence indicating that decreasing sodium — and increasing potassium — would offer many health benefits. In fact, a 2011 CDC study published in the Archives of Internal Medicine concluded that Americans who eat a diet high in sodium and low in potassium have

a 50 percent increased risk of death from any cause, and about twice the risk of death from heart attacks. Knowing this, a craving for salt does begin to sour, doesn’t it?

Just one teaspoon of regular table salt contains 2,325 milligrams of sodium, so it’s important to sprinkle salt sparingly. But according to the CDC, more than 40 percent of sodium we eat comes from just 10 types of foods: breads and rolls; cold cuts and cured meats such as ham or turkey (packaged or from the deli); pizza; fresh and processed poultry (even fresh poultry often is injected with a salt solution); soups; sandwiches such as cheeseburgers; cheese; pasta dishes; meat-mixed dishes such as meat loaf with tomato sauce; and, finally — what we all likely first think of when we think of “salty foods” — snacks such as chips, pretzels and popcorn.

What can you do? First, look at the Nutrition Facts labels for sodium content. Compare different brands — the amount of sodium in similar products can vary widely. Eat more fresh produce (always a good idea) and fewer processed foods. Take the salt shaker off the kitchen table and stock up on non-salt seasonings.

For more ideas, download “Salt and Sodium: 10 Tips to Help You Cut Back” from the U.S. Dietary Guidelines: <http://1.usa.gov/lessaltpdf>.

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