

NUTRITION FACT SHEET

CUTTING DOWN ON HIDDEN SODIUM IN PROCESSED FOOD



Sodium, primarily consumed as salt, is a crucial nutrient for maintaining fluid balance, and proper muscle and nerve function. However, excessive sodium intake is linked to health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke. Processed foods are major sources of hidden sodium, making it challenging for individuals to manage their sodium intake effectively. This fact sheet provides insights into the presence of hidden sodium in processed foods and offers practical tips for reducing sodium consumption.

KEY MESSAGES

- ✔ Hidden sodium refers to the sodium content that is not immediately obvious in processed foods.
- ✔ Excessive sodium intake can lead to health issues such as hypertension and heart disease and kidney issues.
- ✔ Australians should aim to consume no more than 2000mg of sodium per day.
- ✔ Opt for whole fresh fruit and vegetables, limit processed foods, and choose low sodium alternatives.

WHAT IS HIDDEN SODIUM?

Hidden sodium refers to the sodium content that is not immediately obvious in processed foods. Unlike table salt, which is easily recognisable, hidden sodium, is often found in various ingredients used in food manufacturing.

Processed foods which often contain hidden sodium include pizza, sausage rolls, processed meat, sauces and chips.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Excessive sodium intake can lead to several health issues such as:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Kidney damage
- Stroke risk

IDENTIFYING HIDDEN SODIUM

Reading Nutrition Labels

- Check the sodium content - Look for foods containing less than 120mg of sodium per serve.
- Check ingredients list - Sodium can be listed under various names such as sodium chloride, sodium bicarbonate, sodium nitrite and MSG.

Recognise Sodium Rich Foods

Some examples of sodium rich foods include -

- Canned Soups and vegetables
- Packaged snacks i.e. chips, pretzels
- Frozen Meals
- Processed meat





SODIUM CONTENT IN COMMON FOODS

The average Australian should aim to keep sodium intake (from processed foods and salt added at the table) to within 2000mg per day (equal to 1 teaspoon of salt), as per the Nutrient Reference Values for Australia and New Zealand.

It is estimated that 75% of a person's sodium intake comes from processed food.

Some processed foods with hidden sodium include:

Food	Sodium (mg)
Sausage Roll	962mg
Processed Meat (2 slices)	950mg
2 Minute Noodles	931mg
Popcorn (1.5 cups)	570mg
Tomato Sauce (1tbs)	150mg
Pretzels (10)	119mg

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR REDUCING HIDDEN SODIUM

- Choose whole fresh foods - Fresh fruit and vegetables are naturally low in sodium.
- Choose low sodium alternatives - opt for low salt or no added salt versions of canned goods, sauces and snacks.
- Rinse canned foods to reduce the sodium content.
- Keep savoury snacks to a minimum such as chips, popcorn and crackers.
- Limit processed meats such as bacon, sausages, ham, salami and chorizo.
- Opt for lower sodium meat options such as lean roast meat or grilled chicken.
- Limit sauces added to food.

CONCLUSION

Managing sodium intake is crucial for maintaining long term health. By understanding where sodium, hides in processed foods and implementing practical strategies to reduce it's intake, you can support your overall health and wellbeing. Prioritise fresh, whole foods, use flavour enhancing herbs and spices, and stay vigilant about reading labels to make healthier choices.

For more information, please visit:



Australian Government
Sodium Values



Queensland Government
Low Salt Diet

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